

Halo: Project TOZOA

by Tozoa

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Summary: The year is 2552, a force greater then we could ever know has found its way to our doorstep, The covenant, the most lethal force in the entire galaxy has found earth and they are here to glass our world and kill us all

## 1. Chapter 1

The year is 2552, and a force greater then we could ever know has found its way to our doorstep. The covenant, the most lethal force in the entire galaxy, has found Earth, and they are here to glass our world and kill us all. Humanity is fighting on its last leg to stop these monsters, but they may be too strong, it may be up to a few loyal humans to stop them, or maybe a traitor from the covenant will join the fight against its own kind... yet again, this fight is long from over...

Time: 1030 hours on the mission clock. It's a typical day in New Mombasa, children playing, people laughing. Life is good. In this time, many people go into Cryo Sleep, a term used for when people want to take time off and spend time in this frozen sleep. It's mostly used in the military on many long journeys, but it has recently become available to the public. Most use it for illness and go in there to wait for a cure, but the military uses it for their secret projects, like the one kept in a small hospital building in New Mombasa. The lights in the building are yet to be turned on, for some reason it is dead quiet outside, except for a strange sound that can be heard, the sound of a strange hum flying through the air. It gets louder and louder as if approaching the hospital, and then the front door and it's surrounding wall explode, sending chunks of concrete into the line of cryo pods on the left wall. The last pod, #42, luckily escapes any damage. Three large figures walk into the hole, scouting the area for any life, their four mandibles flowing up and down as they breathe, and an older looking one spots the 42nd pod, tilting its head as if confused of something. A smaller one in the back speaks up in a frightening tone. "That's a UNSC Drop pod,

it's going to blow!" He was too late. The door of the pod flings off with a definite pop and imbeds itself along with one of the creatures into the wall as a large "man" steps out of the pod. Though he seems human, his legs are in the same odd angle as the aliens. The aliens are in awe, wondering why there was a drop pod in a cryo line, until the smaller creature's head explodes as the nude man holds out a large UNSC standard magnum. The older alien charges at the man, whose eyes widen, the man now behind him pulling his knife from the aliens neck, the man smirks then says "Damn Elites." before walking back to the closet. On the door it says "Cryo Possessions." He walks in and locates his locker. He pulls it open and looks at the armor and sees it staring back at him, he dresses himself and looks at the top shelf of the locker. He grabs the chip sitting there and puts it into the back of his head, the eyeholes on his helmet flow red and he lets out a loud scream. He looks out of the closet then walks out onto the street. The man instantly spots the large bulbous shape of the covenant tank, the wraith, hovering just above the ground on its anti-grav sections. The man jumped to the left and slid into the alley, he had to take out the wraith for some reason he couldn't figure out. He looked down at his Plasma Reaper, the UNSC prototype of the Plasma Rifle, and figures the Reaper wouldn't do much damage on the wraith, he would have to use his cloak to get in close to destroy it, though the cloak may drain his battery if he leaves it on too long although a short burst may allow him to get past the elites and to the wraith. He made his decision, jumped out of the alley, cloak on. He skirted and hopped over a tumbled wall just as the back of the wraith came into view, and he latched onto the back and disabled his cloak. Two elites who were near looked at him, screamed something in their native tongue, and they began firing. The man's shield took the damage, and as he looked down at his side container on his leg, a Granada popped out of the holster into his hand and he shoved it into the back of the wraith. The man jumped back behind the crumbled wall and got his Reaper to the ready in case an elite decided to come around after him, and his shield was recharging. A loud crack could be heard as the Granada exploded, and then shrapnel could be heard embedding itself into the concrete. There was also the sound of flesh getting shredded by the shrapnel soon after. "Foolish elites," the man thought, instantly scanning the top of the roofs for jackals. He stopped dead on one who seemed confused, the man knew his Reaper wouldn't be able to take down the jackal, but he remembered one of the elites had a carbine. He hopped over the concrete and stopped-one of the elites was still alive and stood leaning heavily on the carbine, as he used it as a crutch. The man looked down and saw that the other elite had a smoldering piece of wraith through his neck, as the live elite hissed, "Who are you! A-Are you a demon!" The man walked up to the elite and placed his hand on its shoulder, surprisingly the man was taller than the elite; the man sighed, and then said "I? I am a monument to all your sins, I am Tozoa." Tozoa pushed the elite, who fell directly onto his back with a thump and looked up at Tozoa, who had placed his hoof on the elite's chest. The elite was confused; he looked at the hoof then back at the Tozoa, and he spurted as he spoke "W-What are you!" Tozoa looked directly into the elite's eyes. "I have no idea." The elite's ribs popped and cracked as they collapsed; Tozoa had forced his hoof into the elite's chest cavity, and he pried the carbine from the elites grip before remembering the jackal. He turned and saw it, and it aimed its Beam Rifle directly at his head. A shot fired from the rifle, Tozoa ducked, rolled, and slammed his back into the smoldering wraith as he checked the carbine to see if there was still ammo, and he smirked inside his helmet as he aimed his carbine at the jackals skull. The

trigger slid down into the weapon, a green radioactive projectile flew into the jackal's skull, causing it to explode and making the jackal go limp and tumble to the ground with a crack. Tozoa threw the carbine to the ground and walked over to the jackal, grabbing the rifle from the jackal's hand and placing it onto his back, where it clicked with a magnetic pop. Tozoa scanned the area one last time, and then walked down a park ramp. Standing in front of a large door, the key pad protruding from it, Tozoa walked up to it and typed in a sixteen-digit code. The door hissed and slid open, and Tozoa looked behind him one last time before he walked into the dark.

## 2. Chapter 2

Tozoa walked through the narrow dimly lit tunnel, for some reason he knew he had to find a human, was he human, he didn't know anymore, couldn't remember anything, only that he had to stop the covenant at all cost. "These... Things think they can come here and destroy earth, they are mistaken." Tozoa said aloud as he walked down the tunnel, he looked around, abandoned cars and trams lay scattered across the turn pike, "great place for an ambush." Tozoa thought, as those words went through his head a burst of plasma flew from around the corner into the wall, Tozoa could hear people screaming "Take out that Fuel Rod!" one screamed "CO Get to safety! We can't lose you!" another screamed. Tozoa Rounded the corner, Plasma Reaper at the ready, He came into the view of a monstrous battle the marines had three down one injured and four in the fight, they had taken down one of the hunters, but the other was still up, and mad. Two grunts stood on the access rails, both holding fuel rods. they had spotted Tozoa, Everyone had, He stood there for a split second and then sprinted toward the hunter, leaping directly over the marines who stood in awe, Tozoa slid under the huge walking covenant tank and shoved a Granada into its soft flesh, he righted himself and slid to a stop, his Reaper in his right hand aimed at one of the grunts heads, the hunter, in confusion, turned and looked at Tozoa, who was now standing with a Fuel rod lazily on his shoulder, The Hunter spoke in it's odd fashion, squeaks and hisses as the worms that make it up rubbed against each-other to make speech, Tozoa laughed at the Hunter, "Elite" he said "I am far more superior then those creatures" The hunter then exploded, it's worm-flesh littering the area, The other grunt was dumb struck, he couldn't believe it, This thing moved so fast that it had taken out his friend Flip' Yap in under 10 seconds after planting a grenade... The grunts head vanished, Tozoa stood with his finger on the trigger of the Fuel Rod... The marines stepped out from behind the Tram car, and looked at Tozoa, He was large, they thought, Bigger than any Elite, and stronger to. This thing was so powerful the marines could feel the heat radiate from him... "Commanding Officer Mendez Second class?" Tozoa asked. She stood there a second then saluted "Yes I am CO Mendez" her hand slowly went to her side, why had she saluted him? Habit? "And who are you?" Tozoa looked her in the eye, his chest moving in and out as he breathed. "To tell you the truth CO Mendez, I'm not really sure; all I know is my name..." "And what is your name?" Mendez asked. "Tozoa" He Replied.

Time 1200 hours according to the mission clock, Commanding Officer Linda Mendez, was standing before this creature, Tozoa, He was a large creature, bigger than any Covenant she's seen, his armor was red, slightly damaged and worn. He wore a full faced helmet, with blue eyeholes that seemed to glow, his top half portion seemed human

enough though his lower half was more like that of an Elite, bent back and in an odd angle, He had five digits though two thumbs. His voice seemed... strange, it sounded as if it was echoing, it may have been because of the tunnel they were in, though it had a rasp to it, he may have been in cryo. Tozoa was standing there looking at her, she realized she had been staring at him and averted her eyes to the ground, suddenly Tozoa's large hand was on her shoulder, She looked up to see him looking at a half opened blast door, five large figures stood there upon the bottom half. Tozoa turned and looked at her. "Brutes," he rasped in a quiet voice, "I'll hold them off, you get your team to that maintenance door and escape." he motioned to a door a few feet away. "But" she spoke up, Tozoa placed one of his large fingers on her lips, "Shhhh, not a word more of this, you must survive." he spoke with concern. She nodded and turned to her team. "Marines! Move out! Let's get to that maintenance door!" Tozoa turned towards the brutes, the chieftain in the center watched the group of marines run off, he looked down at the "Elite" he presumed, why had he not killed the humans? He thought. The "elite" spoke up "hey apes, you're here to destroy earth right?" The chieftain snarled and jumped foreword, He landed with his hammer behind him, his huge hand grappled the pavement as he righted himself, he looked at this "Elite" he felt no fear from him, no emotion. "Yes" the chieftain barked, "aren't you?" Tozoa stood there, he laughed, the rasp in his voice echoing, "No you fool, I am not one of you, I am Tozoa!" Tozoa changed his stance, he felt anger well up inside him, for some reason he hated the brutes, even more than any other covenant. "I am here to stop you." he said, the anger was building Tozoa could feel the hate as if it where manifesting itself on his body, his left arm was hot, glowing even. The brutes took a step back, all of them. A loud pop sounded as Tozoa's left arm erupted in a white light, He glanced over to see an energy sword, at least half of one, protruding from his arm, it seemed attached to his cufflink. The brute chieftain looked at Tozoa "if not elite" he barked. "Then what!" Tozoa, smiling in his helmet looked at the brute. "You know, I'm starting to believe I'm your guys' worst nightmare." The chieftain roared and barreled towards Tozoa, His hammer flung into the air ready to strike Tozoa in the head, the chieftain swung his hammer and the head of the weapon hit the ground, the chieftain looked up in shock. Tozoa's left arm was up, pointed at the brute, the hammer was in half, and the chieftain was enraged. He flung his arm to attack, but Tozoa was gone, vanished from sight, the chieftain felt cold, he looked down and saw white through his body, Tozoa was standing behind him, his hand placed gently on his shoulder, "Hey big guy," Tozoa rasped, "I think it's time you checked out" The chieftain fell foreword onto his belly, Tozoa turned and looked at the brutes standing on the top of the blast door. One of the lackeys had his brute shot aimed at Tozoa, he fired, Tozoa was gone and in the brutes face before the projectile even hit the floor. Tozoa looked into the Brutes eyes, reading his emotions, He had his hand on the brute's weapon, fear was flowing from the brutes body, Tozoa loomed over the creature, looking down on him, The brute tensed up, he tried to pull his hand away from Tozoa, he couldn't budge the weapon, Tozoa pulled and the sound of muscle tearing could be heard, the brutes right arm went limp, The other three were already running away, Tozoa chucked the weapon at one and it hit it square in the back, he tumbled off of the blast door and hit the pavement below. The other brutes were almost out of the tunnel via a maintenance path, when Tozoa appeared before them, He held the other brute in his right hand by its neck, its right arm limp beside it. The two brutes stood in complete fear. Tozoa's helmet hissed and it opened, the brutes eyes widened and they both roared in

pain.

### 3. Chapter 3

Pace, 1230 hours, mission clock, woke up to the sound of a large explosion at the other end of the hall. The alarm was sounding, flashing it ominous red light. He sprinted to the lockers and got dressed to the sound of gun fire, but not just any gun fire, covenant gun fire. He heard the distinctive hisses and pops of covenant weapons. He was dressed now, reinforced pants, vest and the distinctive black helmet, with O.D.S.T. emblazoned on the side. He grabbed his UNSC battle rifle and his UNSC SRS99C-S2 AM sniper rifle and ran to the door. He peeked out to assess the situation, three covenant Elites had managed to overrun all 24 other soldiers from his sector, they must have been ambushed at the other end of the hall, Pace had his own room as he was O.D.S.T. "Poor rookies" he said to himself "this is what the O.D.S.T. are for!" He pulled a frag grenade from his belt and tossed it off the far wall, it rolled down the hallway, toward the Elites that thought they had finished off the last of the humans. Pace jumped across the hallway in the smoke of the grenade. The frag had killed two of the three Elites, and the third ran to Pace's old location. The second the Elite peeked his head in the doorway, Pace was on him, thrusting his UNSC issue combat knife into his back "Friggin' animals" Pace said, as he ran to the hole in the wall and leaped out. The first thing he saw on the outside was covenant drop pods, thousands of them. "The monsters must be trying to take New Mombasa!" Pace saw a covenant scouting party and ran. "Not here, not like this" he said. He turned to the left and saw a tunnel and ran, as he was running through the tunnel, the walls were covered in fresh red graffiti it said "RUN!" then the smell hit him, it was written in blood. He ran to the end of the tunnel and then turned right, and went on to the bridge that ran across the top of the tunnel. He could see the scouting party perfectly "Just like takin' candy from a baby" he whispered. He pulled his UNSC SRS99C-S2 AM sniper rifle from off his back and looked into the scope...5X...10X...he held his breath...the cold steel on his finger was comforting, he pulled one, the rifle let out a loud bang. He had hit the leader, the brute, his head was in pieces, and one of these pieces had embedded itself into a grunts methane mask, and the litter bugger was inhaling oxygen..."double kill" he said to himself. He turned around and saw some half man, half beast put his hand on a marine's shoulder and was about to take the shot, then the beast ran inside, leaving the marine unharmed. Pace ran toward the building, he needed to figure this out...

Tozoa walked out into the warm sun, he noticed a large vessel in the sky, then another further up, The first was a covenant battle curser, but the second wasn't human nor covenant, seemed different though it was on fire and seemed to be losing altitude, Tozoa looked ahead of him, a jackal sniper stood with its back turned to Tozoa, looking down on an ODST who stood on a bridge that went across the entrance Tozoa had left Mendez, he was an ODST sniper, top of his class, Tozoa snuck up behind the jackal. The jackal stood there suddenly he felt pain wash over his body, he thought he'd been shot, he looked down at the Energy sword that went through his abdomen, "an elite?" he thought, he turned his head to see Tozoa there, "no marines are dying today by your hand." the rasp sounded worse, and still echoed. The jackal contorted and spasm, he screamed though no sound escaped his mouth. He tumbled forward and crashed against the bridge next to the

ODST.

A bloody Jackal fell next to him he looked up to see the man-beast, they made eye contact for a split second and then the beast jumped down.

"Wha- what are you?" asked Pace

"I am Tozoa" the beast said in an echoing voice

"Are you a friendly?" asked Pace

"If I was hostile, you would have never seen me" said Tozoa

"Well, that's comforting... I guess" said Pace

"What are you?" asked Pace

"I am...Tozoa"

"No I mean WHA-"

A shot rang out from on the bottom of the bridge.

"I will snipe from here" said the O.D.S.T. sniper, but Tozoa had already jumped of the bridge and into combat. Pace looked down the scope and covered Tozoa from the rear.

"takin' 'em down one by one jus' ain't gunna work!" Pace said. He switched out for his battle rifle, lobbed a frag about 50 yards passed Tozoa to stop the oncoming covenant, and dove in himself. Pace cleared his way through a Grunt line until he got to Tozoa "here take these!" he yelled as he handed Tozoa 3 frags.

Tozoa had jumped from the bridge where he had just spoken with the ODST, there was a large covenant party in front of him, suddenly a loud bang as several covenant flew through the air and landed onto the ground, an elite slammed in front of Tozoa onto the pavement, he was still alive, The ODST ran up to Tozoa and handed him three fragmentation grenades, Tozoa nodded and placed his hoof upon the wounded elites skull, he was a major considering the gold color of his armor, Tozoa pushed his hoof down and the elites skull crushed plush against the pavement with a pop, Tozoa put the 'nades in his side containment unit on his right thigh, he looked

Back at the ODST and nodded, his energy sword burst alive and Tozoa ran into the hoard.

Pace thinks fast, he runs to the Elite major with the flattened skull and takes his golden helmet Tozoa removed before crunching his skull. He then takes the shoelace from a fallen human soldier and stings together the pins of 10 frags, the puts them in the helmet, runs up to Tozoa in a wake of fallen bodies. "Stand back Tozoa!" Pace yells as he pulls the shoelace and tosses the helmet, it explodes and at least 100 covenants are killed. "Move up to the clearing!" Pace yelled referring to the giant crater where the helmet had landed. Tozoa gave him a nod and they moved up. "We need to get to those stairs" Pace said pointing to the stairs of a radio broadcast center about 100 yards away...the path was filled with covenant... Tozoa run up to the crater, Two elites stood there, one snarled then spoke,

"Brother, why do you assist these vial humans, you are one of use... or are you a heretic." Tozoa's left arm glowed with white light, he looked at the elite who wore white armor, the other wore black. Tozoa rasped as he spoke "I am not covenant, I am not human, I am Tozoa, and for some reason. I hate your living guts." The white elite lit his sword and ran towards Tozoa; Tozoa parried the elites attack and then quickly, faster than any could see, attacked. The elite held his trout with his right hand, he sputtered and coughed, his neck slit open, the wound was created so fast that it didn't even have time to coodorise. he fell to his knees gasping for breath, the black elite, shocked and enraged, lit his sword, though Tozoa was gone, The elite felt a sense of numbness in his legs, he was falling foreword he noticed his legs were falling opposite of his body, he was turned upside down and could see Tozoa standing there, Tozoa looked back at him and chuckled. "I don't know how to call this one, Heads, or tails" The elite landed on his back, he couldn't move, he couldn't feel anything, he was tiered, the most tiered he had ever been in his life, he closed his eyes and slept. A sleep he knew would never stop. Tozoa barreled through the covenant hoard, the ODST stuck close behind him and he sliced his way through, they reached the broadcast station and Tozoa grabbed the ODST and threw him inside, Tozoa grabbed the fuel rod from his back and placed all of his plasma grenades to it. He activated a frag and shoved it into the Firing portion of the fuel rod and chucked it into the fifty remaining covenant, Tozoa slammed the blast door as he ran into the station. "Nice touch there Tozoa...I liked it..." joked Pace

#### 4. Chapter 4

"Why are we here human? I don't see your reasoning..." Tozoa said

"This building is not as abandoned as it looks, we will encrypt a message for reinforcements, then head to the military base through the sewers" Pace answered losing his smirk.

"You know this area very well human, you may possibly be useful after all" Tozoa said

"Ya, just call me your tour guide, now let's get moving!" said Pace

The two of them ran to the top of the stairs and pace wrote a message "New Mombasa has been attacked! Reinforcements needed!" and encrypted it to look something like this  
"ffjddjns8883848,!;!eefidb,,&/,&383"

"Now let's get to those sewers!" said Pace...

Tozoa looked at the ODST and gave his signature nod... Tozoa crawled through the damp dark pipeline, he was almost too big to fit inside the pipe, they emerged to a maintenance area, the ODST pointed ahead of them indicating that they're almost there, Tozoa, for reasons unknown to him, wasn't feeling well, he felt slower. Tozoa halted and leaned onto the wall, up until now he couldn't remember anything, but just then a memory flooded his mind, along with emotions and pain, Tozoa dropped to one knee holding his head, he saw within his mind's eye, a memory, though he didn't know if it was his, he was in a room, the whitest room he'd ever seen. Several scientist, or doctors, Tozoa

couldn't tell stood around him, for some reason he couldn't hear a thing they said, he felt pain in his legs and abdomen, the "doctors" were putting needles in him, pumping something into his body, he felt it burn pain washing through him, then... nothing. Tozoa sat on one knee against the sewer wall... holding his head.

"Tozoa! We have to keep moving! If we don't get this base fortified before the covenant get here, it's just as screwed as the inner-city!" Tozoa got to his feet and walked forward, but not with his normal agility, the two of them walked the last mile and arrived at the base. "I need to speak to the C.O. Of this base ASAP!" said Pace

"Look kid! You don't just walk in here an-" Pace had pulled his side arm and put the barrel to the man's forehead "shut up, and take me where I want to go."

"Wh- who are you?" the man whimpered

"I'm ODS'T and this; this is Tozoa" said Pace. Tozoa stepped out of the shadows "now bring me to the god damn C.O!" yelled Pace. The soldier did as he was told, and after about 10 minutes of walking in though the base they were in the C.O.'s quarters

"Who are you? What is this? Get out of my room!" the C.O. Yelled

"I am ODS'T 9468 and that's all you need to know, now look old man! New Mombasa has been attacked by covenant! Fortify this position, I want snipers on the roof, warthog troops patrolling and 50 foot mobiles right inside of the front door, ready to shoot! You get me? And if you don't, I'm sure Tozoa will help you understand! Pace yelled and walked out of the man's room "let's GO people! Let's GO!"

Tozoa couldn't figure out anything anymore, he had no urgency to protect the humans, or anything like he did before, was it the memory he had had? He wasn't sure, all he knew now was HE had to survive this, but for some reason he didn't know. Tozoa stood at the front gate of the base, watching several Troop warthogs drive by; two had civilians, children and women. Tozoa's head pounded again, a flash of a memory he had forgotten, but this time he saw it all, the whole thing... what he was, and why he was made. Tozoa, was not originally what he was today, he was but a man like everyone else had a family, though he had memory of the covenant long before any UNSC officer... maybe that is why they were interested in him... Tozoa's name was originally Roy, he owned a small virtual reality simulator arcade that he ran with his children when on 2352, a UNSC officer showed up, he spoke with Roy about the Covenant, Roy told him all he knew, the man was astounded, this man knew more than the average Joe, the officer thought. "We want to make you a proposition," the officer said, "We want to make you into the ultimate weapon against the covenant, make you stronger, faster, and smarter than ever." Roy was over 200 years old thanks to flash cloning, he could get a new heart at any moment he wanted so it was actually like he was only 98, Roy looked at the man in the eyes "Sir, I am an old man, I'll make you a deal, You can scan my brain and make an AI for your little doomsday weapon and let me be in peace." the officer smiled, just what he wanted to hear, Roy was taken to Havana, a UNSC science and research world, he was put into the scanner. he knew he might die here, so to fully make sure his mind didn't go wasted, he placed encryption



inside his own mind so that the UNSC couldn't erase it from their little weapon, and he was right, Roy did die there as he had thought, though he was reborn inside a new body, Roy awoke though he could only remember one name at the moment, Tozoa, it screamed at him over and over, he sat up, doctors stood around him, Tozoa could feel pain all over his body, he looked at himself, he wasn't human, more of a hybrid of an elite and a human. He had human colored flesh, but the bone structure of an elite, the pain was taking him, he couldn't think straight. He had to get out; his mind felt flooded, thousands of voices screaming at him to run, to hide, to kill. Tozoa was cuffed to the table, though the cuffs broke with ease, Tozoa slammed his fist into the closest doctor's head and it popped like a balloon, his body flew and hit the wall, leaving a crater in the concrete wall. Tozoa watched the other doctors turn, though they moved slow, like in slow motion, Tozoa ran to the door, hitting a doctor aside into the wall and crushing another under his massive hoofs, Tozoa broke through the door, he had no idea where he was, what he was, he broke through the walls, crushing people in his wake, women, children, it didn't matter, the pain was too great, he couldn't stand it. He had to escape, after about three hours, and several brutally casualties Tozoa came to the docking bay, an ODS pod #42 sat in front of him, Tozoa looked around him, noticing the marines, one had a Battle Rifle and he shot Tozoa, though it wasn't bullets that hit him, it was a dart, Tozoa felt himself slowing, getting weaker, "the marines sounded slurred "good shot, that was the only one we had." one said, Tozoa heard the other

"If we had missed I don't know-" Tozoa blacked out... Then that's when he woke up in the hospital. Tozoa was a weapon, made to kill; Tozoa was human, but changed into a monster. Tozoa was alive, but now he was nothing... but machine. Tozoa was, but now, Tozoa IS. Tozoa came to, a marine yelling at him to get up, Tozoa grabbed the man by the head and stood up, holding him in the air, he squeezed and the man's head popped. Tozoa was a good guy, but something in him made him enraged... at everything. "Tozoa, look, we have two hours until the covenant get here, and you have been different since the sewers, you seem off...really damn off, I want to know what's up, just me and you. As friends not soldiers, what's been up every since the sewers?" Pace asked.

Tozoa ignored him and continued to stare out the bullet proof windows of the military base blankly "Tozoa, if you don't tell me what's up and why you have been acting so...different...I don't know if you are fit to fight, I'm ALREADY the only person here that even trusts letting you in the base! So are you gonna tell me what's up you or not?" asked Pace. Tozoa stared out the window a little longer and said... "I remember..." Tozoa said, "Everything." Pace starred at Tozoa, Tozoa turned and looked at him, the rasp in Tozoa's voice sounded worse than ever, he was different, and he had found himself. Tozoa's mask hissed and opened slowly, "You are the only one to see my face Pace" Said Tozoa, "I want to show you what the UNSC has done to humans, to Covenant, to life..." Pace stood there, mouth open, Tozoa had what looked like mandibles, like an elite, though he had a human nose and eyes, his hair was jet black, though his skull was elongated like an elites. "I am not human," Tozoa rasped coldly, "I am not alien... I am machine... Cold emotionless... I was a man once... But no more!" Tozoa's mandibles widened and moved with his "breathe" "Why do I do this! Why do I act like I can breathe! What is the purpose? To make me seem more human?" Tozoa slammed his fist into the wall, and it buckled and shattered. "Why?" he coughed, "Why am I

the one? You needed a guinea pig!" Tozoa stood there, fist in the wall, looking down on Pace. "I need to find answers..." Tozoa said coldly, "I don't want to hurt you Pace, but if you get in my way, you will die." Tozoa pulled his fist from the wall and walked down the hall "I need to speak to Captain Keyes about this..." Tozoa said as he walked down the hall into the CO's Office. "You think Keyes will have your answers? Jacob friggin Keyes! They don't tell him ANYTHING anymore Tozoa! He's a damn puppet! He's all washed up! If you want answers, I can get you answers, the ODST, we're above the law, I can get you all the answers you want, but you gotta help me here. Now. And if you help me Tozoa, I swear I will help you find out whatever the hell they did to you! I'm a soldier, not a scientist, so I can't tell you what they did to you...but I can MAKE people that can tell you, tell you...we gotta deal?" Asked Pace, extending his hand to Tozoa... Tozoa stopped in front of the CO's door he looked down at Pace, his hand extended towards him, "You better" Tozoa rasped, and grabbed the hand, they shook. The alarm sounded and the CO opened the door "Tozoa, Pace!" he screamed "They're here, and they have a scarab! I sent for reinforcements, they're sending a SPARTAN-III Jake or something, He'll help you out." Tozoa didn't know why, but this seemed like it was going to end bad for that Spartan, The doors busted open and a seven foot Spartan in black armor walked in, he held a duffle bag in his right hand, He stopped dead as he noticed Tozoa. "Get down! Covenant hostile!" He bellowed. The Spartan charged at Tozoa, side arm drawn.

## 5. Chapter 5

Pace called off the Spartan, "we don't need you Mr. Trigger happy!" Screw it, let's get some Spartan lasers! The two of them ran to the top of the stairs, they saw two UNSC trying to lift Spartan lasers "give us those marines!" Pace shouted as he and Tozoa grabbed the large green weapons, and threw them on their shoulders with ease. "let's get to the roof!" yelled Pace the two of them ran up the stairs as the sound of explosions where dampened by the walls and got to the roof, "ok, here is the plan, we cripple the front legs with the Spartan lasers, and then when it is on an angle, we take a warthog troop up the left leg, sound good?"

"The other option is death" said Tozoa "it sounds good" they stood up from behind the ledge they were hiding behind, "1...2...3" yelled Pace and both the lasers erupted with a bright red light "let's get to that warthog!" Tozoa rasped. They used the ladder in the backside of the base and Pace took the driver's seat, Tozoa in the back on the chain gun and a newbie marine on the side Pace looked at the kid, he could not be a day over 16 "get outta here kid!" he yelled and the marine popped out "sir, yes sir!" he replied, a look of thanks on his face, and Pace jammed on the gas, they were 500 yards away from the kneeling scarab and they were going about 85 MPH, Pace kept his foot firm on the gas, they were at the scarab going 150 MPH, the second he got on the smooth purple metal, he smashed the brake, the slid onto the base of the scarab, into fires made by the first attack, they hopped out and Tozoa covered Pace as he lobbed grenade after grenade into the scarab's heart, Pace then ran out of grenades. They switched while Pace looked for grenades and Tozoa attacked the heart, the giant covenant machine exploded and they were shot off about 50 yards away, they regrouped at the base "Jake," Tozoa said "You're wounded. I'll be fine." he said. Tozoa looked at Jake, then turned to Pace "Now to get your answers." Pace smirked, Tozoa obliged with a nod.

Jake fell over, and Tozoa caught him, "First Pace, we take care of this Spartan" Pace sighed. "Do you know of any medics in the base?" Tozoa rasped to a nearby Marine, "Sir, yes sir!" he said, and pointed down the hall, "It's this way, and I'll lead you there." The marine walked only about twelve feet when the hall exploded. "Wraith!" Tozoa Howled. "T-Tozoa" Jake said, his voice held concern, "I've only heard one other creature that was able to make the echoes and rasps you can..." "Save it Spartan, we have to get you to that medic!" Pace screamed at Jake, though Jake was already out cold, Tozoa lobbed him over his shoulder and moved through the derby of the shattered hall..."Tozoa! We just took care of an entire scarab; I think these kids can take care of a wraith! Dump Jake and meet me out back!" Pace said

"We cannot just leave!" Tozoa yelled

"Do you want your answers Tozoa?" he shouted back "you know what, screw it! You dump the body; I will take care of the wraith!" Pace ran out to the wraith, all the grunts were dead, Pace just dodged the wraith beams and shoved a frag in its back engine Tozoa watched the ODS run out into the battle, he re-angled Jake on his shoulder and walked down the hall, the med door was open, Tozoa walked in and saw the Doctors busy with wounded, Tozoa sat Jake on an empty table, a med bay Officer walked up, Tozoa looked down at him and nodded, the doctor nodded back, Tozoa turned and headed back out into the hall, a Zealot stood there, mandibles twitching, he pointed at Tozoa "You!" the beast snarled, he had his sword drawn already, Tozoa looked at him "You killed my brother! For this heresy you must die!" The Zealot plunged forward at Tozoa, who sidestepped the blade with ease, he brought his elbow down onto the elites arm and it cracked and fell limp, his sword fell from his hand and landed on the floor, the elite stumbled back, "You!" he screamed, and Tozoa waved his hand at him, as if he were a fly. "You are not worth my time," Tozoa coldly stated. The Zealot fell back out of the building, fear had won this battle.

Tozoa ran to the back of the Base and saw Pace in the back of a 'Hog "Tozoa, You drive!" Pace screamed. "We have to get to Old Mombasa!" Tozoa hopped into the driver seat, he could barely fit, but he could manage, he hit the gas and went down an exit ramp, the sign above it hung by one hinge, it said "Old Mombasa: 12 K" "Okay Tozoa, it's time for your answers, our answer, I want to know what the Fuck they are doing to people! Once we are in Old Mombasa we need to go to the G'hari Projects, once we are there we need to go to the basement of building 14, there is a scientist there. His name is Jona, he used to work for the USNC but now he does freelance stuff, his dad, his granddad, his great granddad, ALL UNSC scientists... all of 'em... if anyone has answers it's him, but he's more than a little scientist..." Tozoa skirted the 'hog around to a parking spot in front of apartment #14, Tozoa noted that the structure seemed unstable, Tozoa hopped out of the "hog and landed on the pavement, dust flew up from the ground where he hit, seems like there were no covenant in the vicinity, Tozoa checked his motion detector just to be sure. nothing, Tozoa hand motioned all clear to Pace, who then hopped from the 'hog, Tozoa didn't want to take any chances, he ran up to the door, and stood on the left, Reaper at the ready, Pace on the other side, Tozoa nodded at him, and they went in. "let me go first, I don't like the guy but at least I know him" Pace said, he did not wait for a response and went in, side arm drawn, Jona was asleep, Pace shook the man, who looked about 35 years old "get up you

wall-eyed SOB!" he yelled "I take it you two have a history" Tozoa said "Just a little" Pace replied "Jona, I know you're awake, you exited REM...but that's a nice little trick, waking up with your eyes shut" said Pace "ohh you got me you friggin maniac, now put that damn gun awa- is that...Toz-Tozoa? I haven't seen you in so long... so very long..." Jona said. Pace lifted Jona off the ground and put his pistol to his temple "tell me everything, I'm not here on business Jona, and I defiantly NOT Fucking around..." Pace said "well you see the UNSC has been working on Tozoa ever sense my father, Tozoa was his creation, and he also had his head smooshed by Tozoa" Jona said. Pace put him back on the ground "continue you dirty rat..." "Well you see after he, it, Tozoa. Killed my father, I took over, but then, I watched as they broke and shaped your legs, and it disgusted me...so I quit..." said Jona "really, is that why I remember you?" Tozoa asked. Jona turned and ran the other way, Pace sidearm still draw, shot him in the back of the head "I have wanted to do that for a LONG time" Pace said, Pace walked over to Jonas computer "this stuff is all encrypted, besides "OLD LAB LOCATION...I guess that's our next lead..." Tozoa nodded "looks like we are going' to Havana" Pace said.

"There's a longsword back at the UNSC grounds!" Tozoa screamed over the roar of the warthog engine, "We can use that to get to Havana!" Tozoa drove on the highway, dodging tipped over trams and cars, Tozoa noted that the covenant battle curser was moving now, looked like it was in retreat... Tozoa then noticed, in shock, that the ship was jumping; Tozoa turned the will of the 'hog hard and they came to a halt. "Tozoa! What the Fu-" Tozoa cut pace off "listen, that covenant ship is jumping, inside the city, let's get to that tunnel to avoid being engulfed by the rupture in slipspace" Tozoa grabbed Pace and ran towards the tunnel, a flash of light as he, with Pace, jumped into the tunnel.

"look there are two ways this can go down Tozoa, we go back to the base, report that jump we just saw, stop them and get some phony ass medals, or we can go back, hijack that longsword, be public enemy's 1 and 2, go to Havana, and get our answers''. Said Pace "you have the 'hog ride to figure it out, if you haven't already..."

"Tozoa, Pace, this is Jake." he said over the radio, "You won't believe this... but the whole base has been destroyed, everything is gone, I have a pelican, I'm the only one left..." "Jake, can you come pick us up? We are on highway 57, exit 256." Tozoa asked. "Tozoa, 10-4" Jake answered. Tozoa turned to Pace, "Longswords gone, so is the base, Jake is bringing a pelican, we highjack it, and go to Havana." Tozoa said. "Now, let's make sure he can find us." Tozoa put his hand out to help the ODST up. "Tozoa, get away from the 'hog..." Pace said as he lobbed in a frag, the warthog started to smoke...Pace lobbed another grenade, and the warthog exploded into flames. "Well, now we plan, look, when Jake steps out you shake his hand, I will handle the rest..." said Pace

"Ok" Tozoa rasped in his worsening voice it was about 20 minutes before Jake arrived, he stepped out...it was the moment of truth...Tozoa shook his hand "thank you Spartan" Two louds snaps of a UNSC sniper sounded, Pace had shot him twice in his right leg at close range with his anti-material sniper rifle, the Spartan fell to the ground "I'm sorry Spartan" Tozoa said

"Pretty easy to take down... Chief would not have gone out like that"

Pace said under his breath

They both hopped in the pelican leaving the Spartan behind...

## 6. Chapter 6

Tozoa sat in the cockpit of the ship, flying through the last layer of earth's atmospheric conditions. Tozoa turned to Pace "Now we're off the planet, but we still need a ship with slipspace capability." Tozoa rasped, his voiced seemed to be getting better. Tozoa opened up the onboard computer. "There's a ship 'The Intent of Main' Docked at one of the space elevators," Tozoa continued "We can highjack that, seems the crew is on leave, we will have no trouble taking it." Tozoa smiled in his helmet; finally peace was so close he could taste it.

"this is gunna be fun" said Pace he walked up and tried to unlock the ship...nothing, he pulled out his side arm and unloaded a clip into the outer door, and then kicked it with all his force...that should work, the two of them walked into the ship and Tozoa jammed his hand into the center AI and overrode it and HE used HIS AI to run the ship, and they took off it took hours, but Daniel finally picked the lock of his cell door. The brutes had already evacuated the ship due to a false alarm, so he had no worry of that rather large guard that was there earlier. However, he wanted to make sure that no one had stayed behind. Daniel noticed a glint from the corner of his left eye. It seemed that one of the brutes forgot to take his plasma rifle.

Daniel picked up the weapon and moved onto the bridge. His hearing was not the best (he did work with explosives after all) but he could still hear voices through the door leading to the main cockpit. Daniel rubbed his plasma rifle for luck and kicked the door down.

"Whoa, whoa!" Pace yelled out at Daniel as he burst into the door with a plasma rifle pointed right at his face. Pace responded by pointing his assault rifle right at Daniel. Tozoa lost his focus for a moment, causing the ship to jerk and Daniel to fall on top of Pace.

"What the hell? What are you doing here?" Daniel yelled, trying to regain his bearings.

"We should ask you the same thing, Guy!" Pace barks as he gets up as well.

"I'm a prisoner of war, what's your excuse?"

"We're fighting this damn war! Is that a good enough excuse, or do I need to tell you my life story?"

"Don't go into labor at the same time, you two," Tozoa joked under his breath.

"You're right. Sorry, man. My names Daniel by the way," Daniel said.

"My name's Pace. Since you're already on here, you might as well come

along. Don't think that means we trust you. For all we know, you could be a brute in a marine suit just waiting to rip our throats out. So, what do you do; anyway?" Pace asked.

"I blow crap up. Grenades, charges, rocket launchers, you name it," Daniel said. "So, where's this ash pot headed, anyway?"

"Havana," Tozoa replied.

"Hell, as long as I don't have to go back in that cell. You can tell me what's going on later, that floor was not easy to sleep on," Daniel yawned right before crashing in Pace's seat.

"\*Sigh,\* it's gonna be a long ride," Pace breathed.

Pace shook Dan "you blow crap up, huh?" Pace asked "well I guess you can come along then, but you gotta get outta my damn chair..." Dan stood up and walked back to the bedrooms. "Thank you." Pace said retaking his place in the front of the ship.

"I like the guy, he could help us" Pace said to Tozoa.

Daniel quickly fell asleep on one of the convenient beds. It wasn't quite as soft as the beds on his old ship, "The Bounty of Loyalty;" but a bed is a bed. Still thinking about his old ship, he soon went into a dream.

"Danny, I find it hard to believe you've grown this much from when you were a rookie," Lieutenant Richard Shayman; Daniel's longtime friend and mentor; exclaimed proudly.

"Don't forget, Ritchie, I had a good grower," Daniel happily replied.

"What the hell does that mean?" Richard asked.

"You made me what I am today, Ritch," Daniel explained. "Without you I would probably be stuck to the bottom of a Wraith by now."

"Daniel, I know you look up to me, but a lot of that was you. I only helped it along. If I died right now..."

"Don't say that. I can't imagine what it would be like without you. Who else would I drag myself to if you got hit?"

Before Richard could answer, a loud rumbling suddenly arose as red lights suddenly filled the bridge. Both the bellowing voices of brutes and the bloodcurdling screams of UNSC troops could be heard from all around.

"Daniel, get out now, I'm going to kill as many of these Brutes as I can," Richard yelled before lowering his visor and cocked his SMG.

"I can't leave you behind, Richard!" Daniel yelled back as two large brutes in gold armor stepped through one of the doors.

"That's a damn order, trooper! Get out NOW!" Richard screamed with his SMG spraying bullets at the brutes coming toward him. However,

that didn't stop the one on the left from grabbing his helmet and holding him up in the air.

"I've heard humans can be pretty rubbery, want to do a hands-on experiment?" the brute laughed while Richard flailed around aimlessly in his giant hand. The brute grabbed onto the lieutenant's legs with his free hand, then began holding him up and pushing both hands closer and closer to each other. Richard's stomach went upwards as he screamed in agony until a frightening \*rip\* was heard and his torso exploded with red.

"You monsters!" Daniel screamed charging blindly at the brutes while firing with his magnum as fast as his finger would allow. The brute on the right responded by delivering a full body attack directly to Daniel's body, knocking him unconscious.

Daniel woke up from his dream in a cold sweat on the ground.

"\*Sigh,\* it was just a dream," he whispered. However, the brute's body slam seemed to have felt a little too real. Then, he was flung into the air and heard an explosion nearby. Tozoa sat in the Med bay, his armor lay on the table next to him, Tozoa was wearing a standard UNSC cabin suit, Though it took him a minute to find one that would fit, Tozoa sat in the chair as his AI fixed his suit, he was reading off of a hollow pad checking the specks of the ship, Tozoa was keeping an eye on Pace and Dan with the ships cameras, Pace was asleep sitting up, and Dan lay in a bed, jerking sometimes. Tozoa smiled, he was about to get answers for everything. "You think you know everything? Remember everything?" a voice echoed inside Tozoa's head, he looked around the room, the voice sounded female. "You have only hit the tip of your memory, your world is about to change, Havana will open up your full brains potential. All the people you know, have befriended, have seen, and will seem extremely different." she spoke. "Who are you?" Tozoa whispered. "I? I am you. Your memory. Your sins." she said. Tozoa stood up, a sudden burst in air pressure, Tozoa saw that deck 3 was expelling atmosphere, He looked through the external cameras. Covenant.

## 7. Chapter 7

Dan heard the wailing of alarms and the room was flooded in red. He looked at his holo-pad and saw the three large Covenant ships closing in. He knew he had to act now, so he grabbed his gear and ran right out of his room. Pace shortly came out of the door neighboring his and ran after Dan. The ship repeatedly from Covenant fire, sending the troopers to the floor a couple of times. Dan and Pace soon arrived at the escape pod area, where Tozoa was already waiting for them.

"Come on, you two! Into the-" Tozoa was cut off by a large quake that toppled all three of them over.

"This ship's not gonna last much longer!" Tozoa yelled, regaining his bearings. Pace, Tozoa and Dan all leapt into the pod, and soon took off. After a minute or so, Dan looked back at the ship and saw it explode into a bright blue ball.

"Havana, here we come," Dan sighed under his breath.

"Ok, so can someone kindly tell me, WHAT THE HELL JUST HAPPENED!" Pace screamed "you know what? Fuck it, we are going to Havana, that's all we need to know, and whatever just attacked that ship SURE as hell just died." Pace said looking back at the ship that was now moving outward in pieces like its own little universe...

Tozoa looked at his mission clock as he put the last piece of armor on, his helmet, 0 hundred hours, only twelve hours ago had Tozoa awoken, he was about to understand everything. The pod jarred and jerked as it entered Havana's atmosphere, Tozoa's mission clock changed to 534, Time zones he thought, The pod jerked hard to the left and Tozoa remained still as Pace and Dan stumbled to the right a bit, Tozoa looked up at them. "If I find something out, and I snap, you need to run" he said sincerely, "If I can't be stopped, be destroyed, if I find out my full capability..." Tozoa was cut off "UNSC drop pod from the Intent of Main what is your crew?" a voice said over the speaker "This is general first class Carter Cortez" Tozoa pressed the button to reply "This is Tozoa, Pace, and Dan, Two ODS'T's and an Android..." Tozoa said coldly "T-T-Tozoa? You're alive!" Carter asked. "Yes, and I want answers." Tozoa replied. As the landing shield on the drop pod raised, Dan began to wonder what Tozoa meant by what he had just said. After a few seconds, he decided he needed to watch Tozoa; just in case something happened.

"Okay, we're going down in 10, 9, 8..." Tozoa announced without turning.

"Ever been to Havana before?" Pace asked while Tozoa was still counting down.

"No, never. But I bet its one helluva place if it's so important that we get there," Dan replied.

"2, 1, impact!" The ship landed; roughly, but safely; onto a small area of Havanian land. Tozoa, Pace and Dan all got out of the pod, unlocked the safety switches on their weapons and went onward.

"Watch out you guys, this place is like the wild east, out of whatever-the-hell you read about in the cowboy books." Pace said

"There is someone ready to shoot you behind every corn-"

"Hold up kids" a rather rough looking man said as he stepped out of an ally, with two goons behind him

"See what I mean" Pace said

"What is this all about" asked Tozoa

"we just want your toys" one of the goons said while reaching at Dan's gun, but in one swift motion Dan drew his side arm and left the first goon dead with one bullet right between his eyes. Pace shot one burst into the leader of the group and dispatched him. Tozoa clapped the last man's head between his larger than life hands and left what used to be his face in a rather red mess. "Well...were gonna need some money if we are going to get around Havana." Pace said while going through one of the man's pockets...



## 8. Chapter 8

After Tozoa stepped out of the pod, the landscape shocked him; it was like he'd been here before. They had just taken down three large thugs though without the armed UNSC marines surrounding him.

"T-T-Tozoa," Carter said with a stutter. "We have authorization to escort you to the UNSC Scientific research and training base." Tozoa looked at Carter, he had a moment of Deja Vu Carter was a tall man, roughly 6' 10", though Tozoa still towered over all of them, Carter was missing his left arm and leg, both replaced with mechanical prosthetics, "You see this man." The female voice was back. "You've seen him before, when you were human" Tozoa's mind clicked, this was the officer who had showed up at his arcade! Tozoa felt a surge of anger, he held it back, but couldn't help him clinching his fist, he hopped it went unnoticed. Tozoa rasped coldly. "Take us, now."

Dan, Pace and Tozoa were all waiting in a small room. Carter had ordered several Marines to make sure they stay there until he arrived from his other duties. Dan looked at both Tozoa and Pace. Pace seemed to be losing his patience (as he was, also) and Tozoa had a very angry air about him. Dan decided not to say anything, and General Carter arrived through the doors after a few more minutes of waiting.

"Sorry to keep you, gentlemen. I had a lot of business that I really needed to get done," Carter announced; seeming to have gotten over his shock from before.

"Don't mention it," Tozoa growled.

Carter ignored him and turned towards Pace.

"Hmmm, you look like a tough guy. Where did you serve?" Carter asked.

"New Mombasa," Pace replied.

"A down-to-earth guy, eh?" Carter said with a smile. One of the marines pretended to chuckle. Then Carter went over to Dan.

"Your armor is dented, must've been in a fight, I suppose."

"I was taken down by a brute and held hostage on one of their ships," Dan replied. "I served on the Bounty of Loyalty before the Covenant captured me and destroyed my ship."

"A good ship, she was," Carter replied. "I'm sorry about that. And you," he said, turning around toward Tozoa. "I don't need to ask you anything."

"Are you sure you don't want a welcome hug?" Tozoa sneered.

"Look, I need to be going, soon. A war's not an easy thing to deal with. Marines take them to their rooms for the night and I'll talk to them tomorrow. Whatever you do, DO NOT LET THEM ESCAPE. Understand?" Carter asked.

"Sir, yes, sir!" the Marines replied in unison.

Tozoa stood in his room, his armor sat on the floor next to him, he was still wearing the cabin uniform from the Main, and he noted through the camera in the back of his long curved neck, that a marine was staring at him through the slit in the door, Tozoa didn't mind, "So, do you remember him?" The voice was back, and more sincere. "Yes." Tozoa said coldly. "Well, that's a good thing; I wanted to welcome you home... Roy." The voice said. "So," Tozoa said as he picked up his helmet, the marine jumped outside the door, "I'd like to ask you some questions..." "Shoot" She said with a slight sense of humor "Who are you, really?" Tozoa asked. "Like I said," her voice was still sincere. "I am your memory; I am... specifically... the memory of your life, before Tozoa..." "Why are you a female voice?" he asked. "It was your wife's... I chose it when I fragmented from your main AI; it was the most prominent memory." She answered. "So... it's true then..?" He said with a sigh. "Yes." she answered coldly. Tozoa stood up, a fire in his eye. He was tricked from the start, he was used by the UNSC, they implanted something into him when he was human, and something that caused his heart to stop. "I was used." Tozoa coughed with a rasp. "They'll pay... They'll ALL pay." Dan was sitting in his bed clicking the stopwatch on his mission clock repeatedly. He usually got to sleep pretty quickly, but tonight he had a lot on his mind. Many questions filled his head.

"What do they want with us? Why are the guys from OUR side virtually holding us hostage? How do Carter and Tozoa know each other? Who can I trust right now?"

The last question stuck to Dan's mind like a needier spike.

"In this time of war, who can you honestly trust besides yourself? Come to think of it, can you even trust yourself?"

Dan shook his head. He needed some sleep, so he lay on his bed and closed his eyes. As he slowly lost consciousness, he wondered;

"Can I even trust the morning to come?"

## 9. Chapter 9

Tozoa sat in his corders, he had just realized the truth, everything. Tozoa stood, fully armored, head to toe, he was holding is helmet in his right hand, he gripped something in his left, and then slid it in between his chest plate, and his chest. "Are you sure you want to go through with this?" the Voice asked. "Yes, I only have one more question..." Tozoa answered. "Shoot." she said with a smirk, she had herself on the holo-display, "What should I call you?" Tozoa asked. "Samantha" She said, with a tint of warmth in her voice. "I see..." Tozoa said putting his left hand out with a chip in it, Samantha touched it and was uploaded directly into it, and Tozoa placed the chip into his head and put his helmet on. He turned to the door. A guard was walking up to it, Tozoa punched the door with ease it flew off, imbedding itself and the guard into the wall, Tozoa walked out and looked left, then right. "If you're looking for Carter, he's to the left" Samantha said inside his head. Tozoa turned left and walked down the hall, he wondered witch rooms they had Pace and Dan in, didn't matter, Tozoa had to make Carter pay first, then he'd worry about the rest.

Time 030 hours according to the mission clock, the night barley covering up the destruction from the covenant cruiser jumping inside the city, Privet first class Marx Jennings lay in the rubble of the old UNSC base, he coughed as he pushed a bit of rubble off of his chest sitting up with a grunt, last thing he remembered was that Spartan-III running off in a pelican after Pace and that... Thing, he looked around the rubble for any signs of life. Small fires scattered the area as he stood up dusting off his uniform, a patch in the shape of a fox on his right shoulder was his name sake, and he made sure it was ok and unworn. He noticed a UNSC drop-pod in the middle of the courtyard, "had the UNSC dropped ODST?" he thought to himself, he walked with a slight limp over to the pod dusting it off to look inside...

The Faith of One hovered just outside the orbit of Havana; Asha was sitting in her shipmasters chair twiddling a Needle Dagger in her fingers as she usually did when she was board. Her first mate Rkze at the pilots control toiling away happily, she always wondered what he was thinking to make him so happy. He was taller than she was by at least a foot and had a scratch on his right eye from a narrow escape from a UNSC cruiser, his skin was a darker grey then hers and he worn a smaller and less glamorized helmet then usually skirmishers. She looked around the room glancing at the nearly eight foot Sangheili, Eon, standing just near the door to the sleeping corders for the crew, though she had her own room as a shipmaster, he wore the standard red armor of a major in his ranks, he was missing his bottom right mandible and wore an older version of the standard helmet, he glanced at her as she averted her eyes away looking over at the two hulking brute brothers, Issw and Ricar, they were laughing and snorting at some vial joke they had just told about her, she didn't care, she looked out of the cockpits window staring off into space, they had only just watched a ship explode as an escape pod left it, she had given the no-go on blasting it, she stared out, letting her mind wonder...

0735 hours, Tozoa barreled down the hallway throwing whoever got in his way to the side, he stopped just before C.O. Carters room looking at his hand and thinking about his memory, he then clinched his first and rammed it into the door causing it to fly into the room, Carter sat behind his desk, the door had just missed him, his hands at his side clinching the chair he looked at Tozoa, a frightened look on his face. Tozoa walked into the room grabbing the door from the wall and placing it back onto the hole he just made, the door clicked shut and Tozoa welded it closed with his plasma reaper, he turned to Carter and slowly walked up to him, outside the room screams of pain and terror filled the halls.

Marine 1134 was sound asleep in his bunk when suddenly; he was encountered by the most amazing-

"Wake up, maggot! You're coming with me!" Dan yelled into the marines' ear; holding him at gunpoint.

The marine was awake and on the floor in a matter of seconds; hastily picking up his armor. Dan was right above him with another captive marine behind him. Dan didn't really enjoy taking soldiers prisoner like this, but he'd been in that Covenant trap for too long to show mercy, and he wasn't willing to be shut in a cage again.

As the put his helmet on, sirens were sounding, and red light flooded

the room.

"Aw, sonava-" Dan scooped up the marines' helmet and jumped through the heavy metal doors leading out. The marine then sloppily threw the helmet on and buckled it to the rest of his armor as he ran through the hall.

"You! Do you know where there's an armory?" Dan yelled at the other marine.

"Y-yes sir! Follow me!" the marine nervously replied. The three ran down the hall; passing by doors opening and lots of tired-looking marines.

Dan didn't know if he could trust either of these marines, but something told him to keep running. That something may have been the sound of gunfire behind them.

"Marine, you'd better not be pulling my leg!"

"Don't worry; he knows where he's going!" the marine from before called from behind.

As the rattle of gunfire trailed behind them; the three reached a large, locked door.

"Stand back." Dan told the marines. He then jumped onto the door and pulled it out at the edges. The design was not unsimilar to that of his own drop pod. Dan threw it to the side and revealed the room's payload.

"Alright, you! Take that sniper rifle over there! You, take the shotgun! Turn around and you won't have time to wish you didn't!" Dan yelled; cocking a pistol and picking up a rocket launcher.

A cluster of fifty-some marines yelling about orders from Cortez came running into the hall.

"Sorry, guys," the first marine said as he ran into the marine cloud with his shotgun blazing. With a tear; the other marine shot from his sniper rifle. It whizzed through the air; blazing through the heads of a couple poor souls. Dan proceeded to jump into the air and fire two rockets at a squad of frenzied marines.

The three continued to pull through, but the marines kept coming and coming. One of the captive marines fired his shotgun right into the midsection of one of the other marines.

"CAAAAM!" the marine screamed as he fell to the ground. The captive remembered that voice; it was of his old friend.

"I'm done!" the captive screamed; throwing his shotgun to the side and running down the hall; the other captive following.

Dan turned toward the corpses of the fallen soldiers; seeing what he was doing, but only a second before grabbing a second pistol from the armory. Even an hour before now, he would have been too human to keep it up, but now even the strongest emotion couldn't knock him down.

"Come on, meatwads!" Dan screamed; firing into the group of marines. He fired both guns at once; frantically but precisely. But the bullets kept pouring, and before long; a red burst came from Dan's arm. Dan's eyes closed as he fell to the ground; wondering if he could trust that he'd fall again.

## 10. Chapter 10

Marx was startled to see an unconscious ODS'T in the pod, he looked around the outside for an emergency release and to his good fortune found it, he pulled the lever as the air hissed out of the pod Marx quickly moved away from the door as it shot into the night, the ODS'T lay in the pod staring blankly out into the night. Marx put his hand on the ODS'T's neck suddenly feeling his face in the dirt and the ODS'T holding his arm behind his back with his elbow in his spine, "Who are you!" The ODS'T yelled.

"Who the hell throws an ally on the ground! You spending too much time in space helljumper!" Marx bellowed back, the ODS'T realized Marx was a UNSC soldier and hopped off his back offering a hand to help him up, "Names Kevin" the ODS'T said grabbing Marx's hand and pulling him up, "Nice to meet your fists, names Marx, privet first class." he said with a smile, the two of them walked over to a nearby concrete pillar that had fallen and sat to catch up as the sun slowly rose over the aftermath.

Asha lay in her bed, she could usually fall asleep easily but something seemed off, she didn't know what though. she stared at the purple glow of the ceiling trying to shrug it off and get some rest when Rkze burst through the door, "Shipmaster!" he bellowed holding a com-array in his hand, "what!" she squeaked back in her native Jackal tongue. He turned around embarrassed that he had barged in but this was important, he motioned for her to get dressed and waited patiently as she did, she placed her hand on his shoulder and he turned handing her the com-array. "We have a little problem..."

A few moments later and they're both in the bridge, she's on her chair and he's leaning against the wall on the left of her, her mouth is open as she's listening to the comms, she throws the device down onto the floor and looks at Rkze. "How?" she says holding her head in her hands. "Tartarus..." he responded. "The Covenant is no more then?" she said, "Are we on our own?"

Rkze stared for a second then looked to the floor, "I don't know... Should we tell the crew?" he said concerned. "Someone has to show some morals" she said standing, clenching her fist. "But who are we fighting for anymore? What is the truth in all of this?" Rkze said folding his arms looking at her, "we'll have to figure that out-" "this is Thel 'Vadam any covenant receiving this transmission, you have all been lied to, the rings are not our answers! They are our destruction! Any ears hearing this, do not fight against the humans, fight for them! Truth must be stopped!" the radio hissed as it interrupted them and the entire ship's sleep, Rkze looked at Asha with a slight smile, "guess we have our answer, if the arbiter says we were lied to, I guess it's so." he chuckled standing up a bit, footsteps echoed down the corridors to the bridge as Eon busted in enraged, "is it true!" he bellowed, his helmet not even latched yet, he pointed at Asha, she nodded. "It was Tartarus" Rkze said with a hint of disgust. The three of them stood in the room, silent for a

moment of time.

Time 0700 hours on the mission clock, Dan woke up in a large chamber. His eyesight was limited by the murky fluid surrounding him, and his mouth was covered by a large mask. As he slowly regained feeling; he realized that he had large, rubber tubes sticking into his arms, legs, and torso. Outside of the tube, he heard muffled voices, and saw two blurry, humanoid shapes.

"Cortez, are you sure this is going to work?" one of the figures who had the manner and dress of a high-ranking scientist asked.

"It has to; too much has been lost for this already," the other voice which Dan assumed to be Cortez growled.

"But a Spartan alone required so much. It years and years of training and augmentations to do what you're trying to do in a matter of hours!"

"This man has the will of an ox, and no feelings to get in the way! Do you know how many of my men he and his prisoners killed, doctor?"

"47, sir, but a sixteenth of a Sabre?"

"I'm sorry; I thought our goal was to move forward. How about we kill this whole thing and let Tozoa push us all the way to Hell?"

The other voice stopped, and Dan could see the scientist jiggling knobs. Instantly, he felt fluids rushing through the tubes, and as they reached his body, he suddenly felt intense pain deep in his muscles. He wanted to cry out, but even his mouth was tense from the tubes.

"Subject prep 56% done, prepare for stage 2 of project Firebird," the scientist sounded off.

After hours of enduring the intense pain, the scientist called out:

"Final stage; begin mechanization."

Suddenly, what he had felt before did not seem quite as bad, as he could feel himself slowly being destroyed from the inside out; metal plates seemed to be coming out of his body. Dan's life seemed to be slipping away.

"No...I can't..."

"Sir! We're losing him!" the scientist yelled.

"A little longer..." Cortez told him.

"Sir!"

But it was too late to stop. As Dan's feeling slowly crawled away, he began to lose consciousness.

The chamber burst open, and what was once Dan had been replaced with a hulking, 3-meter behemoth. With little flesh to spare, he had

become a heavy-metal brute force. As his energy shield clicked on; he felt electricity pumped through the motors around his body. With every pulse, he felt immensely strong; a thousand times more than he ever did. But he was not Dan.

The HUD in his head soon slowly activated, and began running commands into his still-remaining brain.

...

Searching Data...

Current host: Dan

Dan/file=\\CORRUPTED

Host inactive

New entry confirmed-

[Firebird unit FFF]%

Codename/:\_

FuFFF

## 11. Chapter 11

Time 0800 hours, Tozoa walked from Cortez' office down the hall, he looked around, something seemed off, he had just killed Cortez a little while ago and had a chat with Samantha on something, "there's another AI here" Samantha interrupted his thoughts, "is that so?" he said to her, "Roy... It's Dan..." Tozoa felt a shiver up his body, he turned his long alien neck around to see the beast standing behind him, "That's not Dan..." he whispered to Samantha.

Time 0630 hours on the mission clock, CO Mendez was the last in her squad, she leaned heavy on her battle rifle from plasma burns on her left leg making it hard to walk. She was heading back to the UNSC military base, "if it was still there..." she thought to herself, she limped over the last hill on the road to the base, seeing two people sitting on a pillar, she threw up her free hand and let out a cracking "Hey!" she waved back and forth a huge smile on her face, happy to see a few had survived the blast, they stood in shock that she was still alive, Kevin ran over to her with Marx trailing and they each took an arm lifting Mendez off her injured leg and back to the pillar they were at.

"Thank you." she said softly.

"It's our job." Kevin said smiling inside his helmet.

"Anyone else al-" "This is ODST Colonel Gab Knight, any UNSC personal respond" the radio hissed as it interrupted them. Kevin plucked his radio from his vest and handed it to Mendez, "This is Commanding Officer Mendez, what is your location trooper?" she said into the device. "Not a good one..." he responded with a hint of fear.

Eon looked at the Kig 'Yar shipmaster, her body was slender, and her

eyes where pink with a hint of blue, she was shorter than the other Kig 'Yar and seemed quite angry at the whole ordeal, as was he. At that moment the two 'Zomumee brothers barged in, howling something incomprehensible then the older one, Issw, pulled out a plasma rifle aimed at Eon, but before he could do a thing Rkze had one hand on the brutes armed hand and his Dagger against his neck. Asha calmly walked up to Issw and punched him in the face, "This is no time to bicker!" she said in his face, his rage seemed to fall off and he started breathing calmer, "we are no longer part of the covenant," she said tuning away from him, Rkze still held him to be sure he wasn't going to attack, Eon stared at Asha, he had never seen a Kig 'Yar shipmaster like her, she had spunk. "we are going to help the humans." she continued, waking to her chair, "and if that means we die by the false prophets hands, then so be it!" she hollered pushing her fist into the air, Rkze released Issw who promptly grabbed his neck and rubbed it, Ricar patted his back, saying something in his native tongue that Issw nodded too. "So it's agreed," she smiled, "get me a connection to the UNSC base on Havana." she said pointing at Rkze who was already at the controls. "May we pull through this..." she said clasping her hands.

## 12. Chapter 12

Time 0802 hours, Tozoa dodged a third attack from the beast that use to be Dan, this one a little too close, he rolled under his arm and ran off through the hall in search for the Science ward, "they had one for me, they must have one for him" he thought a loud, he turned a corner as the hulking beast ran into the wall Tozoa had just been at, he seemed stuck for a moment until he pulled his arm from the wall with chunks of concrete falling off, Tozoa was already at the other end of the hall, he spotted the Science ward and jumped through the hole that seemed to be from the beast, he looked around the room a bit frantic hearing the beasts hulking footsteps as it trudged this way. Tozoa spotted a scientist, his back crushed, he grasped a needle, Tozoa grabbed it in one fluid swoop as Dan busted through the wall, "bingo," Tozoa said moving forward in what seemed like slow motion, he grasped the needle as the beast grabbed onto Tozoa's body, Tozoa stabbed his neck pushing the plunger all the way in, he could feel the beast squeezing his abdomen but he was losing strength, Tozoa pried the beast hand open and fell to the ground, he stood back up watching Dan hold his neck and tumble back and forth, then fall to the ground with a thud. Tozoa then fell as well, "it's broken" Samantha said concerned. "I can fix it..." Tozoa said standing heavy on his right leg and limping to a work table.

Time 0700 hours on the mission clock, Mendez had found a, still operational, Troop Warthog, her in the driver's seat with Kevin next to her and Marx in the back with a rocket launcher they had scavenged, she turned down an exit ramp, 256, and halted spotting the unmistakable sight of the Spartan-III, he lay against the wall of a service tunnel with his hand on his lag. "He alive?" Marx asked, Mendez looked over at Kevin, his ODS helmet staring back, "I'll check it out." he said hoping from the hog and jogged over to the Spartan in black armor, Kevin took a moment to look over the man before him, he kneeled looking over the armor, it was black with hints of grey on the body, he seemed to be breathing slightly, his helmet was unlike any Kevin had seen, it was like an odd mixture of the standard helmet and an ODS helmet, Kevin turned to Mendez, "all clear, he's alive!" he called back, Mendez pulled the Hog forward to



see for herself.

Asha looked over her armor, she never liked the gold tinge of it and would prefer to wear something less glamorized, though it was her rank, she looked at it a few moments more, "rank?" she thought, "I have no rank." she proceeded to rip the armor apart in her corridors and turned around to see Rkze standing holding a black uniform and a comm-array, closing his eyes, Asha smiled taking them, she then gave Rkze a quick peck on the cheek before slamming the door in his face, Rkze was both stunned and extremely embarrassed though he walked off a bit happier than he was before. Eon leaned against the far wall of the bridge staring at the two brothers, he wasn't angry at them, but more or less their kind, he stood straight and began to walk their way, Issw stood up straight as well in a defensive manner, Eon stopped and held his hand out, "look," he said rubbing the back of his head, "we shouldn't be angry at each other, it was the profits that we need to blame, I hope we can put this behind us and fight for the greater good." Eon finished looking Issw in the eyes, Ricar grunted patting Issw on the back with a smile, "why not brother!" he said with a naive bark, "we have only one to blame, the profits!" he completed. Issw smiled grabbing the Elites hands pulling him in for a hug, "all is well, let bygones be bygones!" he said smiling.

Time 1000 hours on the mission clock, Tozoa sat at the work station with his injured leg completely removed sitting before him, he held the finishing piece of his leg in his right hand and welded it to its proper place on the limp, he then lifted it and placed it back onto his pelvis, it clicked several times as he moved his leg around. "Good as new." he chuckled throwing down the welding gun, he turned to Dan seeing he was still breathing, Tozoa had placed him on one of the beds in the ward, and he had lost a bit of his bulk after he went out but he was still pretty big. Tozoa leaned back in the office chair and closed his eyes smiling in his helmet. He suddenly heard squeaks and barks on the radio and sat up, his translator clicked on and he started to hear the message, "this is Asha 'Yameree of the Faith of One, humans, you have an ally in this war."

Time, 0730 hours on the mission clock, Jake awoke with the thud of his head hitting the floor of the transport 'hog, he looked up to see the visor and helmet of an ODS'T staring at him, he turned away looking to the front of the vehicle "A-OKAY!" he called over the roar of the engine, "what happened, where am I?" Jake asked the trooper, Kevin turned to look at him, "you're safe, that's all that matters." he turned back looking ahead, "Look out!" he called pointing at something Jake couldn't see. The hog took a sharp turn screeching to a halt; Jake leaned up to see the purple hue of the monstrous covenant vehicle, the wraith. Kevin started to hop out of the hog but was stopped short by Jake who was sitting up and holding Kevin's shoulder, "I got this one." Jake said grabbing only a magnum from Kevin's holster before jumping from the hog. Jake landed hard on the asphalt and felt pain shoot up his leg; he fought it off and ran towards the purple glow of the wraith. He stopped and turned to the group of soldiers and gave a salute, "I'm going out of here, but I'm taking these sonsabitches with Me." he said over the radio. Mendez turned the hog and started to drive the opposite way; Kevin stood up on the back of the hog and saluted as they drove off.

"This is Tozoa of the... UNSC science and research base, covenant vessel is what you say true?" Tozoa responded to the message over the intercom to the Faith of One, Asha pressed the button on the comm-array, "Yes, it is. It seems we are one agreeable terms, may we have permission to land?" she asked into the mic, "that's a big 10-4 from me." Tozoa rasped back. Asha nodded at Rkze who was already making the calculations for their decent Eon stood over near the brute brothers showing off his battle wounds and telling tales of his great victories, the brothers would howl in delight at the Sangheili as he depicted the scenes with his hands and reenact each part, Asha smiled leaning back in her shipmasters chair twiddling her dagger, but this time it was not out of boredom, but out of anticipation.

Tozoa looked back at Dan; he smiled as he stood up testing out his leg, "seems to work." Samantha said happily, "well I am the ultimate weapon after all." Tozoa said smirking. "WHAT THE HELL HAPPENED HERE!" Pace said stepping over a scientist. "Well you're alive." Tozoa said chuckling. "Well I kinda shot some marines in the face." Pace said laughing. "Where's Dan?" "I think we need to go over a few things." Tozoa said turning to Pace putting on his helmet.

0730 hours on the mission clock, Jake turned to see not just one, but two wraiths waiting for him, he sprinted towards the closest one on his right dodging the wraiths mortars, he latched onto the machine and shot a full clip into the metal door causing a hole to appear along the crease, Jake rammed his hand into the hole pulling the door up, he saw a brute in the seat, though he didn't think twice. Jake punched the brute in the jaw causing him to go limp and the wraith to fall to the ground, Jake pulled the beast from the machine and jumped into the seat looking at the alien controls, he started it up and glanced at the timer on his HUD. He only had five more minutes. Jake started the wraith, it jumped from the ground and he moved it around firing the mortar at the other wraith, brute surrounded the area, they started towards the wraith, Jake hopped out and stood atop the covenant tank. "You bastards want me!" he screamed, "come at me!" The brutes ran towards the lone Spartan, Jake glanced at his timer, "three... Two..." Kevin looked back to see a white light erupt from where they left Jake.

The Faith of One came through the last layer of Havana's atmosphere. Asha sat in her chair looking at the destruction from the covenant invasion, she saw it all differently now, it all seemed so wrong. The ship landed on the pad outside of the Research facility, Tozoa leaned against the door frame and watched the covenant vessel uncloak, and it seemed no larger than a seraph though it had a black tinge over the normal covenant purple. The bay door opened as an elite stepped out first followed by two brutes and two Kig 'Yar. Tozoa stood straight and looked at them all, the smaller Kig 'Yar stepped from the group and put out its hand. Tozoa grabbed it and shook, "Asha, I presume?" he said, "You'd be correct she responded.

Dan sat up in the ward he looked around the room, he could barely remember a thing, he noticed a blue light coming from the work table, and he slowly stood up and looked at the disc on the table. He looked in shock as he read the name on it, "Ritchie?" he thought. Dan held the AI in his massive palm. He was nervous at first, but then forced himself to speak.

"Ritchie?" he said softly.

The AI came to life in his hand, it shown blue and was wearing a UNSC military uniform.

"Who are you?" the AI asked; looking confused.

"Do you remember me, Ritchie? It's me, Dan."

"Dan?" he asked; voice raised and looking shocked. "It's been so long, and I could hardly hear your voice through all of those mechanical sounds. Can I see your face again?"

Dan turned his head away. "I'm afraid there's no face for you to see. This titanium mask is all that keeps my brain intact; the only shreds of life in my body are simply vital organs that were too critical to destroy."

"Dan... Why?"

"They did this to me!" Dan shouted; his body beginning to expand. "The UNSC we followed into Hell itself turned me into something that they would have brought back!"

"Dan, stop!" Ritchie yelled. If it where anyone else, Dan would have just gotten angrier, but this was his only friend.

"Dan, this isn't your fault. Sometimes, we just have to make do, alright? Like for example, I'm a dang AI; what can I do now that I don't even have a body? Well, pretty much anything I put my mind to. Speaking of which, where is my physical self?"

"He'sâ€• you're dead. Torn apart by the very Brutes you loathe."

"Wow," he whispered; sitting down. "God forsaken monkeys..."

"Hey, we have to make do, right?" Dan said; smiling with an invisible mouth.

"Right," Ritchie affirmed; getting back on his feet. "And right now, I'd like to make do with the behemoth in front of me."

"That's what she said," Dan added with a grin while slipping Ritchie into the back of his neck.

"Dan, grow up! No matter how much metal they throw on you; you'll never change, will you?"

"I guess so, Ritch. I guess so."

## 14. Chapter 14

0800 hours, Gab watched in both amazement and confusion as the two covenant forces fought each other, something had caused a sudden cease fire. Both Gab along with two other marines he picked up, Dave and Michael. They stood in awe as brutes shredded elite, elite ripped through brute, bloodshed followed by bloodshed. Michael looked at the battle, "I feel like we're missin' sumthin'." he said with his Assault Rifle on his shoulder. Gab looked at him, "I couldn't say it

better my-" Gab was cut off by the sound of bodies being rammed and the roar of a warthog engine. "Someone call for support!" Kevin called over the radio. Kevin leaned from the back of the hog, an SMG in his left hand and his right holding onto the hog's cage, he fired into the crowd of covenant who seemed more preoccupied about killing each other than the humans. The hog jumped over Gab's group landing behind them, "all aboard!" Mendez shouted to them as they jogged to the hog, "what about them?" Dave said climbing into the back of the warthog. "We left 'em a little present." Kevin said holding up four fingers as they drove off down the highway, Kevin's fingers went down, when he reached zero the ground shook as a defining explosion sounded from behind them. "Bam said the lady." Kevin said smiling inside his helmet.

Pace looked at the aliens before him, he felt disgusted that he had to join forces with these, things, even if they are not with the covenant. Tozoa turned to Pace, "well?" he said holding up his arms, "I guess... Damn" Pace said walking up to Asha, "Don't think this means I like you." he said holding out his hand to her, "likewise human" she squeaked back. "Do you say that to all the newcomers?" Dan said standing in the doorway of the exit. "Well if the jolly-green giant ain't a hoppin' around." Pace said putting his hands on his hips, "how's the weather tiny!" he joked putting his hands to his mouth acting as if he had to yell, "would you like to see?" Dan joked back. "Alright guys, we need to be serious now." Eon said, his arms folded. "Oh alright." Pace said turning back to the group, Dan behind him. "Now," Asha said, "our ship is unable to jump through slipspace; we need to find one that can do so." "Readings indicate that a Covenant battle cruiser is currently in orbit on the far side of Havana over the small city of Killen." Samantha said over Tozoa's speakers. "Well, who's your girlfriend Tozoa!" Pace laughed. "She's my memory... Of my wife." Tozoa said. Pace stopped and looked at Tozoa, a sense of embarrassment and shamefulness on his face, "sorry ab-" "all is well." Samantha interrupted. "We have our plan, now we execute." Asha said, she turned inviting them aboard the Faith of One.

Gab jumped up and down as the hog roared down the body filled streets, dead brutes, mangled elites, but barely any marines he looked back to see Marx asleep leaning against the cab of the hog, they took turns in shotgun protecting Mendez, she was a short woman, but tough as nails, "don't think I'd be able to walk on those legs..." Gab thought to himself. "Where we headed captain?" Dave said leaning over the top of the guard rails to the cab of the hog, "space elevator." Mendez said back. "Well we're to fight 'em on their own turf, zero-g bullets baby!" Dave said leaning back into his seat. Mendez chuckled smiling a bit. They came up onto a highway leading to the space elevator, there was a make-shift hut on the ground next to an old gas-station, Mendez looked at Kevin who nodded and jumped from the hog, "am I always the scout!" he called walking over to the tent, he noted a radio inside, it looked like it had taken a beating. Kevin picked it up as slurred words and white noise blasted through the air, Kevin walked back to the hog and handed the radio to Mendez, Kevin took his helmet off. He was a young man, not even twenty-five; he had long spiked blonde hair and blue eyes as well as a scar on his left cheek. "This is UNSC- The Covenant are- the space elevator is- LOOK OU-" the radio hissed, just then the large structure in the distance shook with an explosion, the space elevator toppled over falling to the ground with a defining crash, Kevin had jumped up to protect Mendez from the dabree.

## 15. Chapter 15

Tozoa leaned against the wall of the Faith of One, the ship was docked with the covenant battle cruiser, Tozoa held his plasma reaper tight in his right hand before disappearing around the corner. Asha stood in Tozoa's previous spot listening for the call sign. Tozoa ran cloaked down the halls, he stopped dead in his tracks, the entire ship seemed to have been massacred, though it wasn't the normal human carnage, it was covenant on covenant, Tozoa consciously walked the rest of the way to the bridge, he turned back looking down the hall as the door shut and his cloak deactivated. He turned looking at the main controls and pulled the chip from the back of his head placing it into a slot in the computer, "interesting, the ship seems to have no AI or remaining crew for that matter..." Samantha said over the ships speakers, Tozoa could hear Asha's Kig 'Yar footsteps on the metallic floor, along with the rest of the group, the door opened, Tozoa turned to them and said smugly, "she's all ours."

Kevin opened his eyes, he lay on the ground, a large piece of concrete on his chest, he pushed it off and sat up, he looked around and saw the warthog toppled over, they had been fairly close to the area where the elevator hit, Kevin stood up and grabbed his Silenced SMG from the ground, he spotted his helmet and grabbed it putting it on, in a quick fluid motion. Kevin spotted something next to the hog, a shiver ran up his spine and he stepped over a chunk of wall, Marx lay on the ground, a pillar on his stomach and his Magnum in hand, his eyes were already closed, Kevin looked opposite of Marx to see a brute chieftain laying on the ground, holes all the way up his chest to his neck. Kevin smiled in his helmet and whispered to himself, "like the fox you where..." he grabbed the patch on Marx uniform and stuck it on his shoulder, the fibers latched together and he dusted it off. "Mendez, Gab, Dave, sound off!" he called out over the roar of the fires. Dave grabbed Kevin's arm and pulled him into the ally with Gab and Mendez, Dave had his finger to his lips and Kevin nodded in agreement Mendez made a noise like a dove and motioned ahead of her was all clear, they headed off down the alley.

Tozoa sat in the shipmasters chair looking at a data pad, he glanced at Asha who was sitting in the first mates chair twirling her dagger, Rkze stood next to her with his arms folded and he was talking in his normal squawks and squeaks, though Asha seemed only half interested. Tozoa looked ahead of him, Dan and Pace sat in the two navigator chairs, they were catching up, laughing, cutting up, though Tozoa noticed Pace would glance at Eon every now and again. Eon stood at the other end of the bridge leaning on the wall, the two brute brothers stood in front of him telling tales of previous victories, losses, and family life, Eon was looking at Tozoa, though Tozoa knew that he couldn't tell that he was looking at him, Tozoa turned his head to Eon, "do you have a question?" Eon seemed a little hesitant and embarrassed, but he asked, "You look like a brother, though you fight like a demon." he chuckled a bit. "I suppose I am partly a... Elite," Tozoa replied, "though I wasn't by choice" "understood." Eon said smiling a bit. "Hey ladies, if you're all done with your gossip we're about to exit slipspace!" Pace hollered as Dan chuckled a bit, "would you look at that..." Dan said suddenly stopping his laughter, Tozoa stood out of his chair looking at the sight before him, a slipspace whole lay near the earth, and the covenant seemed to be going through it. "Tozoa?" Pace said, "What now?" Tozoa walked up to

the controls and Samantha flicked on the holo-display, "well?" she said. "We don't wanna' be late." Tozoa said. "Let's blow this Popsicle stand!" Pace said pushing the ignition switch as the ship hurtled towards the hole.

Kevin hugged the alleyways wall as he hurried through the bodies that littered its narrow corridors, Mendez was ahead of him limping a bit but still moving like Hell, Dave was behind Kevin and Gab behind him. Mendez held her hand up and signaled for them to rest, Kevin tore off his helmet and sweat beads shot off his hair, Gab removed his hat and wiped his brow, Mendez stood breathing heavily and Dave had his hands on his knees breathing air in like a fan. Mendez turned to them and nodded them over to her, she whispered, "there's a pelican depot just a click that way," she said nodding behind her, "we may be able to get into that thing that opened in the sky." Kevin hadn't noticed the portal before, it seemed only Mendez had, everyone looked at it in awe, "so what we do once we're through?" Gab said putting his hat on, "we finish this war." Mendez said cocking her assault rifle and jogging down the alley; Kevin slipped his helmet back on and headed down behind her. Zrk watched the humans in the ally as they ran away from his cloaked body, his camo deactivated and he stood holding his chest with his left hand and gripping an energy sword hilt in the other, if arbiter was right, he could trust them, Zrk headed off behind them into the dark.

The covenant cruiser entered the slipspace portal, but something seemed wrong, there seemed to be more turbulence then the last emergence into slipspace, "Uh Tozoa..." Pace said, "We have a problem..." Pace turned pointing at the error message on the screen that read "Hal Breach" Tozoa looked at Samantha who was about to say something when everything went dark, "Ok, now it's a big problem..." Ricar said in the brash voice, "Backup power activated main life support online." Samantha's voice echoed over the intercom, "Dan, you have an AI correct?" Tozoa asked, his glowing blue eyes giving the only illumination, "Yes." Dan said, "Plug it up to the ship so they can fix this power outage," Tozoa said pointing at the port "It should be fairly simple, the main power core wasn't damaged, it seems it's been blocked." Samantha said over the com array, Dan nodded and pulled the AI chip from the back of his head, "Rick, you're going to help Samantha here with this, understand?" Ricks image flashed to life and he stood on the chip, "Yes sir!" he said sarcastically. Dan jammed the chip into the port and Rick's mind turned, the world flashed with blues and purples as he entered the grid, "Roomy, ain't it." Samantha said with her arms crossed, she stood on what seemed like a glass floor and her body shown blue. Rick looked around, "yes very!" he said happily, "I've only had a chip and Dan to explore but this is great!" "Well we have a job to do, so you can explore later." Samantha said grabbing Ricks sleeve and pulling him into the dark.

Mendez ran across the battered highway first, she reached the entrance to the depot, she signaled to the rest of them, Kevin emerged from the shadows, though a shimmer of light sparkled behind him, "Kevin! Behind you!" Kevin spun around and his SMG's silencer was halted in mid swing, a figure uncloaked before him, the beast stood over nine-feet tall in black armor, it's chest had a large gash across it's chest that looked to be from a brutes hammer, the hulking elite held it's finger up and shook it, "Allies we are." he said rasping, "is that so!" Kevin said pulling his gun away and holstering it, "The name's Zrk." the elite said smiling. Mendez motioned them to

hurry over before they were spotted, Kevin jogged off cursing under his breathe Gab and Dave ran out of the dark behind him, they all stood next to Mendez as she slid her card with her information through the scanner. The door hissed open as they ran in, the lights flashed on and a Long Sword was revealed in perfect condition, Mendez pointed to the stairs and they headed towards the ship.

The wails of tainted souls behind them, Rick and Samantha pressed on towards the main power supply.

"Something's not right; we should go back," Rick said nervously.

"It's not like we can do anything to help other than what we're doing now. Besides, this is Tozoa we're talking about," Samantha replied reassuringly.

"Tozoa? Hell, not a scratch is gonna get to him with Dan around," Rick rebutted.

"This is why they put me in charge. Anyway, we should get to the main power supply if we follow this large wire; the smaller ones appear to be linked through the wire. This shouldn't be too hard, but watch out for gaps. Since we're AI, even the littlest jolt would fry us to kingdom come," Samantha explained.

"My, aren't you chatty?" Rick snooted.

"What's your problem? I know you're grumpy from the last few months of 'hauling ass' for cargo Pelicans, but we don't have time for this," Samantha scolded him.

"Sorry, sweetie. I'm just a bit-"

"Sweetie!" Samantha yelled, interrupting Rick.

"Look, I really am sorry. It's just... Before I was working as an AI for the UNSC, I was going to be the next Tozoa. However, they had budget cuts for some "Firebird" project. Losing a dream kind of sucks, so please forgive me? After all, how can you say no to this face? Then again, I'm only judging myself by the reflection in your eyes."

Samantha's blue-lit cheeks darkened. "Come on, let's get some light in this Hellhole," she told him with a smile. Tozoa chuckled to himself as his mind followed Samantha at the same time, "what a corn-dog" he thought, Tozoa held his Plasma Reaper close to him as he walked in the front line, Dan stood at the end of the line, and everyone else filled in. "why the hell couldn't you alien bastards made flashlights on your weapons!" Pace said behind Tozoa, "Because we have superior eyesight." Asha smirked. "Speak for yourself jackal!" Issw said in the dark. Tozoa halted and turned around, "did you hear that?" he echoed. The sound of flesh sounded in front of them followed by a horrible scream that sounded half elite half something else, Tozoa turned his head back so the light could illuminate the path ahead, a flash of a figure moved in front of them. "What the fuck was that!" Pace said behind Tozoa, "it wasn't covenant..." Tozoa said with a hint of anticipation. The roar sounded again, this time throughout the entire ship, "Who has the time of death, the rocking of this ship on a sea with no breathes?" A rasping

voice sounded over the speakers, "I'm guessing that is what's turned off our power..." Dan said from the rear, "and now we find it, and kick it off this ship!" Pace said.

Mendez sat peacefully behind the controls of the longsword, she started the engines as they roared to life she felt happy for the first time since she'd been transferred to earth from her previous assignment, the ship lifted off the ground as all the others sat in their seats, the elite they had picked up was the only one standing, Mendez glanced at him, he had a darker skin tone then the other elites and was dressed from head to toe in black armor, "it has no shield." He said leaning against the wall, "I have no power armor, no shield, just active camouflage."

"Is that so?" Kevin smugly said under his helmet.

Zrk ignored him and looked out the window. Mendez steered the ship towards the portal, they slowly came to approach it as a large covenant ship exited slipspace almost running them over. Mendez, thinking fast, flew the vehicle into the cargo bay of the ship, though there was no covenant welcome party to meet them, as they entered the portal all the power seemed to fail, a woman's voice sounded over the speakers, "Backup power activated, main life support is online." Mendez couldn't recognize the voice but it was defiantly human. Mendez motioned towards the weapons, the assault rifles came with a light at the bottom of the barrel, the door hissed open and the team headed out.

Pace was on edge; ready to blast the next thing that came out of the dark, but Tozoa put a silvery hand in front of his face.

"Those footsteps; do you hear them?" Tozoa asked.

"Yeah, I hear 'em," Pace growled with an itchy trigger finger.

"Hold on, soldier. If we're going against what I think we are, then we can use all the help we can get. Those footsteps are far too rhythmic; the Flood isn't that well organized," Tozoa said.

Pace's face went white. The Flood? But..."

Tozoa continued. "The Flood consumes anything and everything in their path. Anyone who isn't one of them is usually against them; be it human or Covenant."

Pace sighed, but then regained his composure. "Sounds fair. Kill a couple bugs; save a few asses. Got a plan, Tozie?"

"Yes. I'll take Dan and Issw with me; they're the strongest. You and Asha keep the ship tidy, if you know what I mean. We're a comm away if things get ugly." Tozoa then motioned to Dan and Issw to follow him as he readied his Plasma Rifle. Issw readied his weapon, and Dan placed a Concussion Rifle in each of his massive hands.

"I've seen quite a few men die by Flood, not a pretty sight," Issw said while getting ready to leave the ship.

"Not that you're much different, Brute," Dan told him with a bit of a snarl.



"Heh, if only we had their kind of power."

Dan said nothing; Rick told him long ago that grudges only corrupt a team.

"They corrupt... Kind of like the Flood," he thought.

"Pace," Tozoa called as the ship's ramp went up.

"What?" Pace called back.

"Good luck back there. Don't fuÑ•k up."

Mendez sat in the cockpit seat, Zrk and Kevin guarded the door as they waited for a radio message from the abroad team, Kevin glanced at Zrk, he looked over at the ODS as if he knew he was looking, "I have no quarrel with you human..." Zrk's eyes seemed to be a different color than most elites, "and I may have jumped to conclusions, but I'm still keeping my eye on you Squid-face, no offense." Kevin said back, "Mendez comes in, this is Gab, we're on track to the ship's bridge, we might find some... 'Company' waiting." "10-4" Mendez said holding the radio receiver. Gab walked down the dark corridor, Dave behind him, "Don't fuÑ•k up..." it was faint and sounded a little further down, Gab turned and motioned Dave on, they started a bit faster. Though he couldn't get that something else was aboard this ship...

Samantha and Rick walked through the data-like hive of wires, they were coming closer to their objective, "You two are a minor annoyance, you're meddling will be gone with our ascendance." the ship rumbled as the voice sounded, followed by shrieks and wails from the dark halls. "What... Was that?" Rick asked Samantha, "All I know is... This is going to be a long ride..."

"Ticking, tumbling, toiling, troubling, organics such as yourselves are no use, but as food you will nourish us!" the rasp continued throughout the ship, Gab was now sprinting down the corridor to the bridge, Dave's light bobbed down the hall as he ran to keep up, Gab suddenly stopped with a slam, his light clicking off and a blue glow filling his face, he looked up to see two glowing blue eyes in the air, Dave skidded to a halt, Assault rifle ready to fire at the blue eyes, he hit his Assault Rifle as the light flickered the image of what looked to be an elite came into view. The beast stood a monstrous height, looming over them, Dave stuttered as he spoke, "WH-What are you!" The figure looked over at Dave, eyes glowing, burning into his soul, "I am Tozoa, and who are you?" the being spoke. "UNSC marine, Dave A-" "That's good enough for me." Tozoa interrupted as he lifted his huge hand out to Gab. Gab grabbed the hand hesitant at first but then calmly lifted himself up, "Tozoa! What's going on up there!" a voice echoed down the hall a bit, "New recruits Pace!" Tozoa hollered back. Tozoa nodded them back towards the bridge of the ship. Dave grabbed his radio and spoke into it, "Mendez, we have friendlies, I repeat, friendlies." Tozoa halted, "Who did you just speak to?" he asked coldly. "Commanding Officer Mendez, the wo-" "Where is the rest of your crew?" Tozoa interrupted Dave again. "B-back in the hanger." He answered "keep going down this hall, the bridge isn't much farther, I'm going to get the rest of your team." Tozoa said running into the dark his blue glow fading away as it bobbed down the hall.

Mendez sat in the pilot's seat glancing up at Zrk every now and then, he had bright green eyes that she could see even in the dull light of the ship, he wore barley armor, it looked more like it was a shipmate uniform, it was skin tight and completely black, almost like spandex, "it's very comfortable." he said suddenly startling Mendez. "It looks like it..." she said looking away. Zrk walked over to her and kneeled, "I don't mind the glancing, but if you're going to look, look." He said, his eyes looking directly into Mendez's. "Well I-" "Mendez we have friendlies, I repeat, friendlies." Dave's voice interrupted over the intercom, Mendez looked away from Zrk, a bit awkward, and Zrk stood back up smiling a bit. Metal clanks sounded down the hall, Zrk grabbed an Assault Rifle and stood next to Mendez aimed at the door, Kevin next to him. The door buckled as it snapped open, a tall figure stood there, its eyes blue, "T-Tozoa!" Mendez said from behind Zrk. "Well I see you've managed to survive this long." Tozoa said chuckling a bit. Zrk lowered his weapon a bit, he couldn't believe the sight, the being looked Sangheilian, though didn't act it, he was taller than any brother Zrk had laid his eyes on, he then noticed he was looking right at him. "Who's your friend?" It said with words like ice, "he's a friendly, picked him up after the covenant civil madness planet-side" Mendez said smiling. "Well the more the merrier!" Tozoa said warmly, "it's not safe here." his voice changed so quickly Mendez could have sworn it was someone else entirely. "I'll escort you back to the bridge, you'll be safe there." he said, a tint of warmth in his voice. "Understood." Zrk spoke. A few moments passed and Tozoa exited with Zrk caring Mendez behind him, Kevin next to them, "the bridge isn't that far, we'll be there in no time." Tozoa said walking into the dark.

Samantha walked through the holographic world before her, Rick behind her following closely, "we'll be there in a few more moments." she said happily, the voice began speaking again, rumbling the ship, Rick looked behind him as Samantha walked foreword, "You two seem different, knowledge at its core, but should you prove inconvenient, you'll sure be a bore..." the voice said, though it seemed only speaking to them." god, this is going to be... Interesting..." Rick said as they continued on.

Kevin followed the two large alien creatures, though the one in red didn't seem the same as the others he'd seen. Tozoa stopped at the corner of the hall holding his hand up in a fist, Zrk and Kevin stopped behind him, Tozoa slowly turned his weapon around the corner, at the other end of the hall, about twelve feet, stood something Tozoa had only heard about, it's body and skin a green tinge and mangled beyond recognition, it made dead shrieks as it slammed at the door to the bridge, Tozoa turned to look at his followers, his blue eyes lighting their faces. "I'll take him out quietly, you'll have to follow slowly until I get him, make sure you don't make much noise." at that moment Tozoa's arm slowly lite with white energy, and he faded away, along with the blade. Subtle metallic clanks sounded as his invisible form walked down the hall, Zrk walked in front of Kevin, the beast hitting the door was dimly illuminated by a flickering emergency light. It looked as if it was an elite at some point, but now it's head was twisted, it's arms mangled, it's body lost, It stopped and turned towards Zrk who crouched in front of Kevin, it's back to the beast. The creature stared at the area they hid, Zrk's armor concealing them from it, suddenly the beast howled as it's right side split from it, it fell to its knees and it's other half fell to the floor with a fleshy plop, Tozoa appeared under the light and his blade retreated into his arm, he turned to the door and

rhythmically knocked, the door hissed as it opened and a small man, maybe five foot three, walked out in ODS'T gear, Tozoa patted his shoulder and motioned at Zrk who stood up revealing Mendez in his arms and Kevin behind him.

"Well isn't this a great surprise!" Pace said as he locked the door as the last of the group walked in, "two pilots are better than one, don't get me wrong Rkze is a great one, just saying, two heads ya know!" Pace chuckled, Zrk sat Mendez in a chair at the pilot's controls, she looked at Rkze who was looking at her, and he gave a friendly nod and then went back to tapping away at the controls. Mendez couldn't believe it, in little under a day she met some giant crazy UNSC Elite who tore his way through New Mombasa, a group of ODS'T's and marines who had survived long enough to make it to the ruined UNSC outpost, a Spartan, and then a crew of Covenant who were on their side, not to mention Zrk. She looked over at the shipmaster, who returned the glance. She stood suddenly and laughed, "introductions you numbskulls!" She looked at the three who had come in, "we already told your pals our names, I'm Asha." she said with a bit of a chirp, "And I'm Rkze." the Skirmisher at the controls said without looking up, "those two," Asha said pointing at the brutes, "are Issw and Ricar, brothers."

"And I'm Eon." the elite in the corner said a bit cold, arms folded.

Mendez spoke up, her voice a bit ragged, "I'm Mendez, Commanding Officer."

"Kevin, just, Kevin." The ODS'T said his helmet sitting next to him as he smoked a cigarette.

"And I'm Zrk, Spec-Ops class Major." the elite in all black said.

"Well sense introductions are finished how about we go over the game plan?" Dan said walking over next to Tozoa.

"Samantha, are you sure-" "and now the clock hits its mark, these two dwindle on like a spark, they may ignite a larger part, but their friends have yet to meet their mark." Richard was cut off by the voice.

"That answer your question?" Samantha said with a sarcastic tone. "A few more feet and we should hit the main data stream and from there it's cake." as she said that the room shifted causing them to move at a faster pace. "Speak of the devil..."

"So, when do we get out of here?" Pace asked the rest of his team as

He cleaned off his sniper rifle.

"We're going to have to kill these Flood, first," Zrk replied. "They

May not be organized, but as long as they're here, they're a threat."

"Where's Rick and Samantha, anyway?" Issw asked.

"They'll make it," Dan told him.

"This battery from our ship was damaged a bit by the Flood," Mendez

Announced, "But we should have enough power to get the guns working."

"Good," Tozoa said, "we'll need some cover fire. Pace, have you

Finished your rifle?"

"Clean as ever," Pace called back.

"Good. You'll be a good mobile support unit. Dan, you should go first

Since you're the strongest."

"Alright," Dan said, gripping his rifles. He thought back on what

Mendez said; when she called him a Spartan. He'd never considered himself a Spartan before. Spartans were glorious heroes of war, not twisted steel abominations. Still, Dan had his mind, and knew that was

Where he had his power, not hardened android bodies or shallow titles.

He had to grasp what was at hand.

"Ready?" Rkze asked with his hand hovering over the "release" button.

Tozoa nodded, and Rkze pressed the button, causing the door too slowly begin opening.

"Looking forward to this, Toz?" Dan asked.

"Well, I'd be lying if I said I wasn't," Tozoa replied.

The door lowered slowly revealing the hall to the exit of the ship then lowered completely, making a large clank as it hit the ground.

"Mother of God..."

The hall was filled with parasitic puss-balls, Tozoa righted his rifle and began to fire, as the hall filled with blue light it revealed larger masses, half-green skinned beasts, howling in pain. The door quickly sealed shut; the only ones left in the bridge were Asha, Mendez, Rkze, and Eon for safety. Dan rushed forward into the crowd of beast, in a swift motion he fired dual Assault Rifles as well as crushing two combat forms with his right hand and stepping on another two with his left foot, Tozoa slid a frag under Dan's feet into a group causing them to burst the continued foreword into the dark. Dan ripped through the masses of green-grey flesh, Tozoa and

the others picking off the stragglers, "Dan hold up!" Pace called, but Dan seemed to be in the zone as he smashed through a flood-carrier as it exploded Dan seemed to vanish, his light dimming as he ran down the dark purple hall, Tozoa tried to follow but was jilted by a flood-infected brute, "Well, who's ready for a firefight?" Kevin said aloud.

"Bet I can get five kills in a row." Zrk said lighting his sword.

"You're on." Tozoa said, both his arms bursting to life.

"We're here." Samantha said with a cold chill in her voice.

"You've found this hole, but so has another, a metallic friend, perhaps a brother?" the voice echoed. Samantha began to move data around in the system, the creature was connected to the ships system, and he was the system! He controlled everything, she, had to stop that.

"What should I do?" Rick said.

"Distract him." she said coldly.

Dan slowly stopped in the hall; he looked around, suddenly the lights flashed on and he felt a pain around his stomach,

Dan forced himself to stay conscious as the massive tentacles pushed against his chest. They put up so much of a fight that they were strong enough to briefly take out some of Dan's suit functions, but he was stronger. After a moment, Dan's visor clicked on to reveal a hideous, greyish-brown mass. As Dan looked around, he saw that he was surrounded by hundreds of writhing tentacles; meshed into a sea of vine-like protrusions.

"Can you hear me?" a gravelly voice asked inside Dan's head.

"Who... What are you?" Dan asked the voice.

"I? I am the Gravemind, but one as tainted as yourself should be asking: 'who am I?'" the voice replied. "That, of course, is a question I can answer. Your mind is my database. I can read, interpret, and manipulate all that I want," the voice explained as Dan felt a sharp pain inside of his head. But Dan stood his ground.

"Indeed you are strong; strong enough that death seems but a distant fantasy in your eyes. Yet, your sin imbrues that will. Tell me; is a will directed towards what they are against truly their own? But worry not, for I can hold that will."

As The Gravemind spoke, Dan's vision was suddenly blurred, and the sharp pain grew in his skull.

Rick jumped into the systems of the ship, messing with the functions, the voice was rambling on about something, he wasn't sure what, and he turned off and on main power systems in areas of the ship. "This should make him think."

If Samantha could find a way- "ah, there it is." she thought, she

pulled a large bulk of data out and deleted it, the connection the creature had faded as it slowly lost power, she just hopped this helped Tozoa and the others.

"I stand as a monument; that which will forbear the blood upon your hands."

Gravemind's words were louder now; stronger and more painful to Dan's mind. Dan almost blacked out, but he held strong. "You may have a body of titanium and steel, but your feeble human heart will never release your sins, unless I am to take them."

Dan's visor once again clicked off; the pain growing even greater than before.

"So tell me, Daniel; are you ready to denounce your sins and face the monument?"

Dan stumbled a moment, still well-bound with tentacles. He paused for a moment before announcing his answer to the Gravemind's offer.

"The sins of mine are the sins of mine; you cannot take up what is written upon the Earth itself. Throughout my life, I've felt as much fear as anyone, but I pushed on when others were too frightened to move. This will is also mine, so your will to take it is all but a lie. The things I've done can't be destroyed, but they can be denounced; and with my will, I shall do so. Sorry, Gravemind, but I must strongly refuse."

As Dan spoke, he immediately burst from the Gravemind's powerful tendrils. His visor immediately clicked on, and he grabbed a grenade launcher and concussion rifle from the many bodies that littered the ground before him; one in each hand. Gravemind screamed in pain; blurring Dan's vision and inflaming his mind. But Dan pushed on; blasting and reloading with both hands as the many tentacles shriveled away from the explosions. Before long; Dan had run out of ammo, and had begun to uproot the tentacles from their very sprouts.

"What are you doing, Daniel? You shall never be forgiven!" Gravemind screamed into his head. "Daniel is gone; his sins are cleansed. Now stands FuFFFF, here to avenge him. Sorry, Gravemind, but this one's for Rick," FuFFFF replied while holding a cluster of long tentacles in the air; oozing dark fluid from the area he had his grip upon. The pain was now greater than before, but FuFFFF had destroyed enough of the vile protrusions to leave the grey mass from before exposed. As viscous sludge's flowed from its sides, FuFFFF ran towards it at full speed. "No!" screamed the Gravemind; in one last desperate attempt. "I am the monument to your sins!"

"In that case," FuFFFF said. "FuÑ•k you, messiah!" In only a split second did he speed into the mass at full force. The resulting explosion was enormous and grand; a mixture of both burning and projectile sludge jetting outward into the blue. FuFFFF's dues had been paid; the Gravemind no more.

An explosion erupted and air started to vent into space, chaos filled the ship, Tozoa grabbed Zrk, and Kevin telling the others to follow, they ran back to the bridge. Tozoa hopped Dan could make it back.

Tozoa shut the door to the bridge behind him as they all filled the room. "Anomaly deleted." Samantha said appearing on a holo display, "yea, and just in time!" Rick said putting his hand on Samantha's shoulder; she then delivered a deafening blow to Rick's head causing him to fall out of view. "Well, I hope you can land this bird." Tozoa said. Samantha grinned, "of course, it's not that hard, twist some nob's here, and flip a switch there..." The monitor of the ship lit up with the view of the anomaly Samantha spoke of, "What... Is that?" Pace said looking at the huge installation. "That's... The Ark, according to the Covenant battle net." Samantha said. "Well. Let's hit it with all we've got-" Tozoa was cut off by a deafening explosion; they had collided with another covenant cruiser, the two ships buckled and air vented from them both. Tozoa scrambled to get the others up and out of the bridge; he looked around the room, both the brutes were dead, one impaled the other a barb through his neck, Asha had a crushed leg, Gab and Dave were nowhere to be found, but Zrk and the others seemed fine. Rkze carried Asha as they hurried out of the bridge to the escape pods, Kevin hurried and grabbed Pace before he was smashed by debris, Tozoa motioned the others in the direction of the pods and followed, he held two chips in his hand tightly, once they reached the escape pods Tozoa told them to get in, he would take the other that took most of the damage. The pods hissed as they flew into space towards the installation. Tozoa placed the chips into his head.

Tozoa awoke to the sound of Samantha's voice "Tozoa! TOZOA!"

"I hear ya..."

"Oh thank the heavens! I thought you were gone!"

"Where are the others?"

"According to your tracker, a few miles east."

"Good, I'm headed that way, any word from them."

"No."

"Well, I'll check it out."

Tozoa stood up and checked his weapon, the mission clock read 0000, that couldn't be right. Tozoa looked around, he had landed on a ridge, he looked east, down the ridge. Tozoa looked at the sky, thick black smoke came from the beach, looked to be maybe two or three miles from here. Tozoa walked to the edge and jumped, he landed in the soft sand of the beach and started towards the smoke, at this pace he could be there by sundown.

Carry on, mind the gap

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